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A STUDY OF OMANI TEACHERS' CAREERS:
A JOURNEY FROM ENTHUSIASM...

By

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Abstract

This study of female English language teachers and trainee teachers in Oman offers important insights into teachers' personal lives and professional development, and very specifically into the unique progression of career stages through which teachers pass. This group also acts as a paradigm of the current situation and future development of Oman itself. Both qualitative and quantitative research approaches are used to analyse 190 Questionnaires and 25 semi-structured interviews which afforded insights into the world of female teachers in Oman. Although I only used female teachers, who do have problems unique to their gender, it is possible to extrapolate a wider picture from the way they are treated, and the way they develop and manage their development.

Gender has emerged as an underlying determining factor in teachers' choice of a career, and the way they then manage that career, existentially and institutionally. Granting women access to education and work, and thus recognizing basic intrinsic rights, has placed Omani women in a paradoxical situation: they are stressed by determinations of identity made by themselves and others as they try to cope with a proliferation of roles and expectations.

Social relationships within the school and recognition of teachers' efforts are two main elements respondents say are crucial for their sense of career satisfaction. However, "satisfaction" is found to be a complex concept, and one which allows a deeper and more comprehensive conceptualizing of respondents' lives. While teachers may display a sense of "job comfort", in which they are generally comfortable with "satisfactory" work conditions, this proves to be a superficial expression of contentment. "Job fulfilment", on the other hand, describes a deeply satisfying relationship with the tasks they do, and the school environment generally: "job fulfilment" suggests an experience of a profound sense of comfort with the intrinsic rewards of their job. The research suggests there are important implications in terms of how intrinsic and extrinsic satisfiers work both in relation to the wider social structure, as well as within the school itself.

My research recognized that respondents moved through four main career stages: the academic stage, the novitiate stage, the maturation stage and the mid-career stage. Each stage was marked with specific characteristics; teachers in each stage expressed different, though clearly related concerns. This research presents a clear linkage between the initial decision to

teach, subsequent development of a commitment to teaching, and the concomitant desire to quit.

The research examines the applicability to Oman of extant models of teacher career stages, developed in the Western literature, and considers where an Omani developmental model may agree with and where depart from these models. The overall findings illustrate the powerful role of socio-cultural forces on teachers' professional and personal development and, considering these, facilitate the discussion of issues of gender and job satisfaction within the teaching profession. Wider extrapolations from the data analysis may help generate further research on teachers, giving them the voices they need for their future development and empowerment.

Chapter One: Setting the Scene

1.1. Introduction

“The teacher who walks in the shadow of the temple, among his followers, gives not of his wisdom but rather of his faith and his lovingness.”

(Gibran, 2001:46)

Teachers are not just another group of workers, they are a particularly important group because their work determines the success or otherwise of any socio-economic development. Little research is concerned with teachers as humans; most has hitherto looked at the technicalities of their pedagogy - for example how their work affects pupils' learning. New research aims at “sponsoring teachers' voices” (Butt et al., 1992; Goodson, 1992b and 1992c; Zeichner, 1995 and Day, 2000) to produce a more subjective account that helps examine the teachers' world from their own points of view. To study teachers as both human beings and professionals is vital, since their personal lives deeply affect their professional lives. (Goodson, 1992b, Hargreaves, 1993; Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992) Making this link and showing that examining teachers' work in the context of their lives “allows a rich flow of dialogue and data” (Goodson, 1992b:14) lies at the theoretical heart of my research about the lives and careers of Omani women teachers.

Importantly, in the context of a developing country where citizens' voices are not generally heard, and where an autocratic and bureaucratic style of government actively stifles feedback, research such as this is a way of “reconceptualizing educational research so as to assure that the teacher's voice is heard, heard loudly, heard articulately.” (Goodson, 1991 cited in Goodson, 1992b: 10) It is apparent, looking back at my raw material, that such feedback was deeply needed - a situation of communication poverty not unique to Oman but which is particularly acute there. “The hunger that [teachers] showed to reflect upon their professional lives in the presence of

a neutral yet friendly outsider ... taught me much about the loneliness of many teachers' working lives." (Nias, 1991: 151) The issue I uncovered was not merely isolation, already a well-known and well-documented phenomenon, (Veenman, Denessen, Gerrits and Kenter, 2001 and Wallace, 1991) but also a sense of being ignored: I found my sample was very keen to share the stories of their careers – often engaging with my research seemed to have a cathartic effect.

The essence of this research is based on the supposition that a better, deeper understanding of the psychology of the teacher offers a precise understanding of the functioning of the educational system within which they work. (Hargreaves, 1993: viii) It is not only that "[u]nless we first understand teachers we can hardly claim to understand teaching" (Beynon, 1985: 158) but also, unless we seek to understand teachers and their concerns, and the strategies they use to deal with their concerns, we cannot hope to have a rounded picture of society as a whole. Without such a picture, necessary systemic changes can neither be conceived, nor attempted.

1.2. Significance of the Study

The importance of this study stems from the belief that the teacher is the most important element in the teaching/learning process (Goodson, 1992a and 1992b and Hargreaves, 1993). Any plan to improve the educational process has first to consider the development of the teacher as the central element in it. Halliday (1996: vii) considers that "no amount of administrative development, curricular development, management organisation, quality audits or anything else of a similar kind is so important to education as the promotion and maintenance of a tradition of good teaching." The way to ensure such good teaching is through the professional development of the teachers. "After all, it is the teachers who ultimately hold the key to the success of the educational enterprise and it is surely time that we began to see the world of schooling from their point of view." (Hargreaves and Goodson, 1996:24)

Teachers need to develop professionally at every stage of their career. However, the professional needs of teachers differ and are influenced by many factors. Fessler and Christensen (1992: 1) observe that "[s]ince the needs of teachers change dramatically

through their career-long journey, the support systems available must adjust to these changing needs.” Therefore, the best way to find out what these needs are is by studying the teachers themselves. However, studying teachers does not only mean examining the technical aspect of their jobs; it extends to studying their personal lives recognizing how much influence these have on their careers. There is, especially in the Omani context, a need to “move from the teacher-as-practice to the teacher-as-person as our starting-point for development.” (Goodson, 1992b: 117) This means a better understanding of teachers, their problems and concerns, professional needs, the origins of and influences on their pedagogic philosophies and practices, and their development processes.

This research has both a theoretical and practical use. Besides adding to knowledge of teacher career development, it examines the impact contextual factors such as gender and society may have, and contributes to the growing database on teacher career stages – it is the first of its kind to be carried out in this specific context. The resulting understanding of Omani teachers can work as a basis upon which pre-service and in-service training programmes can be developed or altered. The findings can also be meaningful for education specialists in neighbouring countries with a similar culture – specifically other Gulf States. Furthermore, the research suggests methodological procedures for other studies on the same subject. A difficulty I faced was the lack of germane research in contexts other than the UK/EU or USA; specifically I lacked research pertaining to any culture similar to Oman’s. There is already a concern in the UK about the applicability of research findings from USA; how much greater must be the gap of applicability between research carried out in the UK or USA and an Arab culture?

1.3. The Sultanate of Oman: An Overview

The following sections offer background information on the context of my research, the Sultanate of Oman and its educational and teacher preparation systems. Contextual factors are of key importance in the interpretation of almost any data, and have a particular relevance in this case. Because my research uses a sample of Omani female teachers, and is, specifically a study of their pedagogical development within the country, it is necessary to describe the location precisely to help create as full a picture

as possible. Many local socio-cultural specifics, for example attitudes to women and their traditional roles, are particularly relevant to research which examines how women adapt to new roles. Oman is an unusual nation, taken either within the context of the Arabian Gulf States, or the wider Arabic-speaking world: its uniqueness needs to be highlighted if certain, perhaps stereotypical perceptions of Arab society, are not to be taken for granted.

1.3.1. The Geography

Oman is located on the Southeast of the Arabian Peninsula in an area of approximately 309,500 square kilometres. It has 1,700 kilometres of coastline from the Strait of Hormuz in the north to Yemen in the south, and overlooks three seas – the Arabian Gulf (Persian Gulf), Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea. It borders Saudi Arabia in the west, the United Arab Emirates in the Northwest and Yemen in the Southwest (see Figure 1.1). It is a country of few roads outside the capital and major towns, and much difficult terrain. The desert interior is sparsely populated, and temperatures there can read over 50 degrees Celsius in summer. In the north, there are fertile coastal fringes and an inhospitable and mountainous interior; in the central area, a considerable empty desert quarter, while in parts of the southerly Dhofar region, capital Salalah, Oman experiences a climate during the monsoon season not unlike parts of the Indian subcontinent, with flora and fauna to match.

Finally, the geography provides, as elsewhere in the region, the defining economic fact of Oman – oil and natural gas. Fossil resources act as powerful economic and social motors, transporting and transforming societies – though it should be noted not always in a simplistic exponential development.

Figure 1.1: Map of Oman



1.3.2. The Renaissance - 1970

In 1970 there were less than 30 kilometres of paved roads in the entire country¹; no national airport; no health care; no media of any kind, and, apart from very basic Koranic schools— religious schools based on the recitation of the Koran – no educational infrastructure (see 1.3). After the beginning of oil exports in 1967, important and irreversible changes began to affect the country.

¹ This figure varies – the Oman Statistical Yearbook (1994) suggests a figure as low as 10 kilometres for 1970.

Oman speeded up change when Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, the present head of state, took power on July 23rd, 1970. Before then, Oman had been through different phases of independence and power to decline, isolation, semi-colonialism and internal political conflicts that had had many negative impacts on all aspects of life. One of the new Sultan's first reforms was to set in motion the foundation of modern government structures. He launched major development programmes to upgrade educational and health facilities in a country plagued with illness, illiteracy and poverty. His regime opened a new chapter of development, and social and economic growth. It may seem strange to use a name which, in European terms, suggests a revolutionary flowering of talent – a “Renaissance” – yet this is exactly what has happened since 1970: the transformation of a feudal society into the beginnings of a modern one, and there has been “a gradual transformation from a traditional, subsistence, agrarian and barter economy to a cash-driven, consumer oriented, semi-industrialized service economy.” (UNICEF and MOD, 1995: 21)

1.3.3. Omani Society

Omani society is deeply conservative, especially in the interior. The effect of Islam, the religion of the majority, is evident in many everyday details, and works as a cohesive and constructive force. Despite all the changes since 1970, Omanis continue to display a strong attachment to their Arab and Islamic culture.

Omani society is patriarchal, with men making most of the decisions dominating political, economic, social and family life (ibid). Although there are now women in both the Majlis A'shura and the Sultan's Consultative Council, the overall socio-political complexion remains male dominated. It should be noted, however, that women are far from powerless, even in such a context; not only have they entered many varied professions (apart from teaching and service industries) their domestic position should not be considered universally passive – though laws still fail to offer substantive rights for women.

The social fabric in Oman is unique, encompassing people from many different ethnic groups: Arabs, Baluchis, East Africans (Zanzibaris), South Asians (Indian, Pakistanis,

Bangladeshis) and a small group of Europeans. As a result, there are different languages spoken apart from the official Arabic, such as Baluchi, Urdu, and Swahili; English is the language of business, and is increasingly becoming a *lingua franca*.

Geopolitical and historical factors have contributed to such a racial and linguistic blend. Oman's location at the end of the Arabian Peninsula facilitates trading access within and outside the Gulf. Oman is almost a natural meeting place geographically between the Persian north, Indian east, African south and Arabian and European west. Nor should it be forgotten that, for a considerable period, Oman was a political and economic entity when the rest of the Arab world was still under the Ottoman imperium; it had a considerable presence on the East Africa Coast from the Seventeenth until the end of the Nineteenth century in what is now Tanzania, and on the Makran coast in what is now Pakistan. This presence was supported by a considerable sea power, and extensive diplomatic contacts – Oman was the first Arab state to establish diplomatic ties with the young US. Omanis left to develop trading infrastructure, and there was considerable miscegenation. Many descendants have returned to settle in Oman after 1970, either attracted by the better opportunities of a modernizing state, or avoiding conflict and collapse elsewhere. A major factor in the development of a racially mixed state has been the country's dependence, since 1970, on expatriate labour to build and maintain infrastructure. Although many expatriates have little or no legal status as Omani nationals, this diversity has had a great influence over the attitudes and outlook of the Omani people in general. Omanis are, in many ways, more tolerant of other cultures than in general in Arabia, yet adhere to their own traditions. Another effect of the dependence on such foreign labour is the dependency attitude some Omanis exhibit.

The Omani population is, globally, one of the most youthful, with more than 41% under the age of 15. (Ministry of Development, 1997) This means that, out of a population of 2,325,438 (1999 figures), more than 1 million are of school age. This has significant implications for the provision of services and education. More importantly, a population growth rate of 3.7%, one of the world's largest by World Bank estimates, suggests that by 2016 the Omani community will number 2.9 million; by 2020 the estimate is just short of 4 million and by 2039 the estimate is 6 million. (ibid.) This unusual demographic is the result of high birth rates and lower infant mortality. The average household size is large

at 8.0 members - Oman has been experiencing a baby boom at 37.96 births per 1,000 of the population (2001 estimate) (countryreports website), and the government, mainly for economic reasons, is now promoting the idea of smaller families. Significantly lowered infant mortality rates are the result of an improvement in health care provision, better female education and rising standards of living. (UNICEF and MOD, 1996)

Despite the growth in population, Oman is still a large country most of which is unoccupied or sparsely populated. The breakdown of age groups suggests that the dynamics of change in Oman will largely be driven by demographics, and that in many cases the most that policy can do is reflect this.

1.3.4. Women in Oman

Omani women are in a far better position today than in the past. They play a more active role in society than women in most other Arabian countries. The government pays special attention to female education and women are considered a valuable resource in the development of the country. (Curtiss, 1999) The 5th Five-Year Development Plan (1996-2000) gives particular attention to improving the economic and social status of women. (UNICEF, 2000) Employment laws have been designed to help women move towards equal treatment with men, and discrimination in pay, conditions or promotion is, officially, frowned upon. Despite government efforts, and very much in line with global problems of involving women equally in all economic sectors, women in Oman do not enjoy an equality of opportunity: some employers fear female employees will need more time off for domestic responsibilities, and ideologically traditional views still restrict women to a “maternal” role, limiting wider social and economic participation. In the interior, there are more conservative views regarding female employment, and certain jobs are not considered suitable. Another obstacle that impedes female participation in the workforce is the concentration of job opportunities in the capital.

The advent of free, universal education has been the key factor underlying the change in women’s status and roles in Omani society, although a woman’s main role is still, generally, viewed as domestic (Al-Ghafri, 1996). Those changes in perception that have

evolved have been steered partly by the government's vision of the roles Omani women should play socially. Women in Oman were among the first in the region to win the right of candidacy, election and vote. Some were legally allowed to vote and run for election for the first time in 1997, when the Council of Oman was established, consisting of both the already-established Majlis A'Shura, and the Council of State – the Majlis A'dawla. There are currently 2 female members (appointed in September 2000) among the 83 members of the Council appointed by the Sultan for a three-year term.² Both the A'Dawla and A'Shura councils have had a significant effect on national identity, and both reflect the growing importance of women, but also the distance they still have to travel.

There is a growing involvement of women in economic activity and the workforce in general. As a factor of the youthfulness of Omanis in general, over half of all economically active women are between 20 and 35. The educational level of the female workforce is higher than that of their male counterparts, and rising (UNICEF and MOE, 1999). Two-thirds of employed females are employed either as professionals (40.2%) or clerks (23.4%) (ibid). Although different careers are open to Omani women, there is “a certain degree of ‘gender stereotyping’ which might be influencing Omani women’s perceptions of ‘female appropriate jobs’” (ibid: viii). This is evident in the large numbers of women becoming teachers, which is considered a suitable career (see chapter 6). Moreover, society’s preference for separation of the sexes in the workplace (Al-Musalamy, 1995) is another factor underlying Omani women’s choices of teaching as a career since state education in Oman is a single-sex system.

Education is the sector in which the biggest proportion of employed Omani women is found – 37.2%, compared to less than 5% of the male workforce. 39.1% of all Omani workers in education are female (UNICEF and MOD, 1996), and two-thirds of these are classified as professionals, representing 82.7% of all Omani female professionals (ibid.). Despite the increasing levels of participation in the labour market, appropriately supportive policies concerning child care, maternity leave and other issues of concern to

² In the September 2000 elections for the 2000-2003 term, there were 597 candidates for the Majlis alShura, of which 23 were female. The electorate numbered 175,000, and was further expanded in 2003.

working women are still seriously needed to facilitate female employment (Al-Musalamy, 1995 and UNICEF and MOE, 1999).

There is a substantial trend towards later marriage among Omani women, though they still marry earlier than Omani men: the average age is 20.7 for women and 24.7 for men (UNICEF and MOD, 1996). Education and city life are the main factors associated with later marriage, and very early marriage decreases with each passing generation, noticeably so among those with higher educational levels (ibid.). Another result of education and work outside home is the tendency for women to have fewer children (UNICEF and MOD, 1995 and Al-Musalamy, 1995).

A UNICEF report (2000) summarizes the factors that restrict female participation in economic activities, giving particular insights into the dominant role that social forces play. It suggests traditional views still restrict women within a maternal role and other family-bound tasks, limiting their social and economic participation, and that there has been a development of negative attitudes among women as a result of ideological advocacy by some teachers and educational institutions that women are unable to work in specific professions due to physiological limitations. Such attitudes impact negatively on women's evaluation of their own aptitudes and skills: there is a conventional female tendency to restrict themselves to "appropriate" jobs – office administration, teaching and medicine. The report concludes that women's preferences could be due to prevailing concepts of appropriateness, in the case of teachers, for example, long school holidays allowing them to combine work and domestic responsibilities.

Clearly concepts of what is, and what is not possible professionally frame the way women will develop. Even where there is broad agreement with the dominant ideology of appropriateness, a sense of being limited may have a considerable effect. This sense of limitation may be more acute in a society, like Oman, which had developed quickly over a short period – expectations are likely to be raised rather than stifled in such a context.

1.4. Education in Oman: Past and Present

Like all other aspects of modern Oman, a serious approach to the establishment of an

educational infrastructure began with the change of government in 1970. Before 1970 there were only three private schools in the country, located in the two main cities: Muscat in the north and Salalah in the south. These contained 909 male students taught by 30 teachers. There was no provision for the education of girls. Elsewhere, Koranic schools offered boys and girls the chance of basic literacy and numeracy. From 1970, priority was given to the establishment of a modern educational system, and oil revenues were important in the swiftness of the establishment. (Al-Dhahab, 1987; Al-Alawy, 1994 and Al-Salmy, 1994)

Thirty-three years later, the picture is very different. The achievements in the field of education, as in other fields, have been remarkable. The school year 1999-2000 started with over half a million pupils, at primary, preparatory and secondary school levels, attending more than one thousand schools (Ministry of Information, 2000). These numbers are particularly impressive since education, although free at all levels, is not compulsory; they illustrate the importance Omanis attach to education as a tool for both personal and national development. The average class size in 2001/2002 is 32 pupils and the average number of pupils per teacher is 20. (MOE Statistical Yearbook, 2001/2002)

1.4.1. Aims of the Educational System in Oman

The aims of the education system place the citizen at the centre. The economic and political need for universal literacy and better training, greater equality, both between individuals and regions, health awareness and the creation of some sort of political identity appear to be major objectives, and are delineated by the Ministry of Education.

- (1) To tackle and eradicate illiteracy;
- (2) To remove problems of gender inequality;
- (3) To obviate regional inequalities;
- (4) To encourage better health awareness and thus health care provision;
- (5) To train Omanis to take an active part in the economy as part of the current government “Omanization” programme;
- (6) To invest in “renewable” human resources. (Ministry of Education, 1999)

It is clear that, apart from specific Omani elements, this is the structure of any educational programme. In the context of Oman, the need for a literate, trained population which no longer relies either on oil and gas revenues, or on cheap expatriate labour, is vital for economic and political stability. The educational policy-makers of Oman recognize these needs; but there may be a large gap between such recognition and the implementation of adequate, effective or politically acceptable changes.

1.4.2. Stages of Education

The educational system in Oman is highly centralised. All pre-school, primary, preparatory, and secondary education is overseen by the Ministry of Education which is also responsible for setting the educational policy, as well as recruiting and training teachers, setting the syllabus and producing the teaching materials and textbooks for all subjects. Oman is divided into 10 regions for administrative purposes. In each of those regions there is an educational regional directorate which is responsible for the educational and staff matters though it is not separate from the central authority in MOE. The primary level accepts pupils at the age of six. At the end of six years, successful pupils join the three-year preparatory level, the aims of which are to help them develop emotionally and cognitively, and acquire a sufficient quantity of skills, knowledge and ideas. Preparatory is an intermediate level between primary and secondary. The duration of the secondary level is also three years at the end of which successful pupils are awarded “Thanawiya Amma” - the secondary school leaving certificate – and entry into higher education is determined by the percentage achieved. Pupils at the secondary level study either in the Art or Science streams during their second and third years.

1.4.3. The New Basic Education System

The current three-phase educational system is being gradually replaced by a simpler system called “Basic Education”, which started in the academic year 1998/1999. It consists of a basic primary education lasting 10 years, followed by a secondary education of 2 years. This new scheme is the result of comprehensive plans to adapt the education system to meet the needs of modern Oman. Classroom hours have been

extended, lessons lengthened from 35 to 40 minutes. This has meant an increase in the number of hours spent in the first 10 years of education, from 5,693 hours to 9,600 hours. To help in this increase the school year had been lengthened from 32 weeks to 36 weeks. Great emphasis is given to mathematics, science and IT. English is taught from the first grade. It also implements co-education in the first four years. (UNICEF and MOE, 2001a and 2001b)

The general aim of Basic Education is “the comprehensive and integrated development of the learner’s personality within the context of Islamic principles and Omani cultural identity, as well as cultivating his/her ability to interact with the surrounding world and instilling loyalty towards his/her country, the Arab-Islamic nation, and humanity.” (UNICEF and MOE, 2001a: 8) This aim reflects the Ministerial change in direction, as it addresses a more complex view of the learner, compared to former educational aims (see 1.4.1).

1.4.4. The Context of ELT Teaching in Oman

The English language takes a prime position in the educational system in Oman. This partly is because English is the second most used language after Arabic. English has been taught from grade four but the new basic education (see 1.4.3) places more emphasis on it and thus English is taught from grade one. Up till 1989 Oman has used English course books which were produced by foreign publishers. This changed in 1992-1993 when the educational authorities decided to use locally written, printed and published language course books. (Harrison, 1999) These are called Our World Through English (OWTE).

Teachers of English (as well as other subjects) were largely expatriates with varied cultural and training backgrounds. Those teachers mostly come from India, Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, Sri Lanka, and Sudan. However, due to the Omanization process (see 1.5) the number of Omani ELT teachers is increasing steadily. In the academic year 2000/2001, Omanis made up 43.4% of English language teachers in the Sultanate. There are a number of in-service training programs (Harrison, 1999) aimed at foreign and national teachers. Teachers are monitored through their inspectors. Inspectors come

from a variety of cultural backgrounds and experience but have to operate within an Omani system; there are guidelines that they need to follow. Their main task is following teachers' professional progress and assessing their linguistic and pedagogic abilities. An annual report is written by the inspectors about each teacher which can be used for promotional proposes. Their role involves "advise and aid teachers professionally through a stated programme of observational class visits and subsequent discussions (such visits to take place at least three times a year to each teacher for whom the inspector is responsible) and to prepare and write half-yearly reports on new and problem teachers and final reports on all their teachers." (English Language Department, 2000)

1.4.5. The Status of Teaching in Oman

Teachers in Oman are highly regarded and, generally, enjoy respect from parents and pupils: this is especially true for women. Their salaries are comparable to other government employees who hold equivalent qualifications and have the same work experience. Teachers are promoted on the basis of seniority and their annual performance reports written by their inspectors. There is a great demand among women to qualify as teachers, because in Oman, as is the case in many other countries (Bradley, 1989; and Hantrais, 1990) teaching is considered a suitable career for women: in fact this may be the primary motivation for women to join the profession in Oman. The turnover rate among female teachers at all levels is virtually non-existent, because of a lack of alternative employment opportunities.

Although many Omani men qualify as teachers, only a small percentage actually teach; although teaching is regarded as respectable for women, the low status of male teachers in a profession "suitable for women" acts as a major disincentive: in 1997, 4.7% of Omani males worked in the education sector compared to 37.2% of females. Today, more Omani men enter the teaching field – 32.3% of the teaching force in Oman are Omani male teachers; 60% of those teach at the primary level. (MOE, 2002) Those might have non-vocational incentives, perhaps being unable to secure a socially more acceptable job or the immediate availability of a secure job in teaching after graduation because of the demand for teachers –especially male Omanis.

A study by Mouawath and Ahmed (1990, cited by Al-Salmy, 1994) explored the motives behind male and female student teachers' decisions to teach. The research used questionnaires, distributed to a random sample of first and second year student teachers enrolled in a two-year programme to qualify as primary teachers, at two teacher training colleges in Oman. While no comparison of male and female motivations was made, four motives were found to drive respondents to apply for places at teacher training colleges: to serve their country; as the only alternative to gain some form of higher education; to improve their financial status, and finally because of the short period of training. While the first response may be accounted for in a number of ways, the rest suggest that the status of teaching in Oman is guided by a mixture of pragmatism and financial motivation: teaching as a vocation does not register as a major motive.

1.5. Omanization and Early Retirement

In an attempt to capitalize on “renewable” local human resources rather than “exhaustible” fossil and expatriate resources, the Omani government made a decision in 1988 to encourage the replacement of expatriate employees, on whom the country is still very dependent, with trained Omanis where possible – the hope was that this would be without detriment to efficiency. With 69% of Omanis under the age of 25, there is a serious need both to train local people and simultaneously create job opportunities: a difficult balancing act in a developing economy, especially during a period of regional and global instability. The government has enforced levels of Omanization in both the public and the private sectors, but the concept may be more palatable than the reality of enforcement – the reliance on non-Omani expertise is simply too great, and the habit of reliance too ingrained. The Ministries of Education and Health together employ three quarters of the expatriate employees in the public sector, and while the aim to reduce this may be laudable, the implementation by those directly affected is unlikely to be easy, and the effects on government unpredictable. Whatever the process of Omanization in the longer term, the demand for Omani teachers for all levels in the short to medium terms is considerable, and set to increase because of the youthfulness of the population. There have been few difficulties in recruiting Omanis, especially women, but there is a difficulty in recruiting and sustaining male teachers. Thus Omanization of education posts among females has reached 86% in primary schools,

but only 40% in preparatory/secondary schools in 1998/1999. Perhaps partly due to success in primary education, the government has decided to feminize all teaching posts of Cycle One of Basic Education (years 1 to 4).

In 1996, a new rule was introduced which gave employees under the age of 55 and with a minimum of 10 years service, the right to early retirement with the consent of the department head concerned. It also gave the right for the employer to request an employee take early retirement. Those who do are forbidden from joining any other government organisation. This strategy has the advantage of replacing less educated and less productive employees, who were mostly hired during the early 1970s and 1980s, when there was acute demand for manpower of all kinds, with more qualified Omanis. In some cases it displaces useful and experienced talent to the private sector – this may have certain negative effects. The number of teachers who took early retirement between 1996 and 1998 was 2,172; among these, 81.8% choose to retire early while 18.2% were forced to retire. (Ministry of Information, 1999) It can be imagined that while the concept of encouraging the employment of Omanis is a positive step which may have important long-term consequences, both in terms of quality of provision and teacher commitment, in the short to medium terms many aspects of pedagogy may suffer: the question raised by such a policy is, what might be the difference in balance between attitudes to, and generated by extrinsic and intrinsic rewards of expatriate and Omani teachers?

1.6. Teacher Training in Oman

Teacher education in Oman is very new, and it is clear that at every level there are still failures of comprehension and policy implementation. Although training started in the mid-1970s, this was, initially, only a very basic preparation. As modern education was extended to all citizens, a huge demand for teachers was created, and one which could not simply be supplied by expatriates – who, at that period, were mainly from other Arab countries. There was therefore an emphasis on the quantity rather than the quality of teachers recruited, and little emphasis on the complexity of training – in the early days of the development of any sector, creating a functioning system comes ahead of more abstract concepts.

The first training of Omani primary teachers started in the 1975/1976 academic year. It was called “the First Programme”, and students who had completed first preparatory (7th grade) were enrolled in a two-year preparatory programme (Issan, 1995; Ministry of Information, 2000). Essentially these early programmes used those already educated to educate those who come up below them. Twenty-five students were accepted in this programme, which ran only once. Another programme was developed in 1977/1978. It was a three-year programme called “Teachers’ Secondary School”. Successful holders of the third preparatory certificate were accepted, and at the end of this programme students received a secondary school teaching certificate. The implementation of this programme was encouraged by its popularity in neighbouring countries, such as Bahrain and Saudi Arabia (Issan, *ibid.*), but may not have recognized unique Omani characteristics and problems, and was in any case at best only a temporary and exploratory measure. Again, importation of concepts works well at the initial stages of implementation, until systems can be designed to fit a national socio-political and economic character. At the beginning of the academic year 1979/1980, another programme was introduced called “Teachers’ Institutes/Additional Courses”. It lasted a year, and was offered to holders of secondary school certificates. At the end of the programme, trainees received the “Diploma of Elementary Education”. 2,521 teachers graduated from this programme (*ibid.*).

All these programmes were cancelled in 1983: it was evident they were inappropriate for the preparation of effective teachers. Currently, there are two types of institutions responsible for teacher training: the Teacher Training Colleges and The College of Education and Islamic Sciences at SQU. The main difference between these institutions is that the TTC qualifies teachers for the primary sector, whereas SQU qualifies teachers for the preparatory and secondary sectors – though there is currently a proposal to include pre-school and primary education at SQU. In addition, SQU is the only institution responsible for training EFL teachers.

1.6.1. Sultan Qaboos University

Since my research sample is being or has been trained at SQU, an overview of the pre-service training offered there constitutes a basic frame of reference. SQU is in Muscat,

the capital of Oman, and was established in 1986 as Oman's first government university – an example of the country's new education policy. It consists of seven faculties: the College of Education and Islamic Sciences; the College of Arts; the College of Engineering; the College of Science; the College of Agriculture; the College of Commerce and Economics, and the College of Medicine. These faculties offer various undergraduate and graduate, specifically Masters, programmes. The academic year consists of two terms of 16 weeks: the spring term runs from September to January, and the autumn term begins in February and ends in June. There is also an optional eight week intensive summer course. Both Arabic and English are used for instruction, but English dominates all science and business courses. In 2000, there were over 6,000 university students of whom about two-thirds were female. (Ministry of Information, 2000) In the academic year 2003/2004, SQU accepted a total of 2590 students, 52% were females of whom 28% were enrolled in the College of Education.

1.6.1.1. The College of Education and Islamic Sciences

This is the largest college. Completing a four-year programme, students graduate with a Bachelor of Education, which enables them to work as preparatory and secondary teachers. Specialisations include Islamic sciences, Arabic, English language, physical education, fine arts, geography, history, home economics, the sciences (physics, biology and chemistry), maths and computer science.

To be accepted, prospective students need to fulfil what is an interesting mixture of academic, physical and moral/ideological requirements, reflecting a unique attitude to education and its values. Naturally there are academic requirements: prospective students must hold a secondary school certificate with total grades at or above 85% and pass the initial interviews – which are usually a formality; they should also, preferably but not always matriculate from secondary school in the same year as enrolment. There is an age requirement, that they be no older than 25 (unless otherwise stipulated by the University's Academic Council), which reflects the upward pressure of Oman's youthful demography, and a "fitness" requirement. This latter may reflect an overall social ideology unresponsive to special needs. Finally a student should have a 'good reputation', with no criminal record, or general history of 'misconduct'. (Ministry of

Higher Education, 2002)

1.6.1.2. The Components of the Pre-Service Teacher Training Programme

In order for the student to receive the BEd, they must successfully complete 132 credit hours. The programme consists of three main components each with allocated credits. **General Cultural Courses** are required to be taken by all students, and make up 18 credit hours. Most students spend the first year taking these requirements in addition to their specialisations. **Educational Courses** in education, psychology, teaching methods, curriculum, micro-teaching and teaching practice (TP) make up 36 credit hours, and are offered at the College of Education. **Subject-Area or Specialisation Courses** are allocated 78 credit hours, and are offered to students in the college of their specialisation. (Issan, 1995)

1.6.1.2.1. The Teaching Practice Component

This component of the pre-service programme takes place in the final year, during the 7th and 8th terms. For one day a week, in the 7th term, student teachers are placed in one of the state preparatory schools (students' ages range from 11 to 14). During the 8th term, trainees continue practice at preparatory level, very often at the same school for one day a week, with another full day at a secondary school, in between attending university courses. This organisation of teaching practice, which provides less classroom contact for trainees than pre-service programmes in the UK, has to take account of certain constraints (ibid.).

1. Since providing teaching practice for a full term would demand more teacher educators to assess and supervise trainees, in 1995 only one teacher educator was available for each specialisation, with the possibility of this increasing to two in the case of there being more than 100 students in a particular specialisation.
2. It is difficult to make use of the Ministry of Education teacher inspectors because of differences, and hence conflicts that might arise between them as a result of different ideas about teacher preparation.

3. Providing teaching practice for a full term would also demand a large number of schools to ensure effectiveness: impossible because of the relatively small number of preparatory and secondary schools in the Muscat area where the university is located. Any attempt to use schools in other regions would not be possible, as this would incur costs for accommodating teacher educators and trainees. It would also increase the burden on teacher educators, who have teaching responsibilities at the university.
4. There is a lack of cooperation between the College of Education and schools in other regions – perhaps reflecting wider lack of pedagogic cooperation, and a poor understanding of the need for policy coordination.
5. Providing teaching practice for a full term could result in lower contact time with regular teachers, who would still be held responsible for grades at the end of the year. There is therefore the possibility of negative reactions from school principals, teachers and parents.

More classroom contact has been recommended (Grenfell, 1990) as one of the most important aspects of pre-service teacher training. In the few studies on SQU teacher graduates (Alkhateeb and Ashoor, 1997; Issa and Abdulaziz, 1997; Al-Barwani; Ibrahim; Alaam; Jalal, Yahya and Al-Sulaimani, 1997; Al-Barwani, 1997; and Al-Barwani and Ibrahim, 1997) subjects consistently criticised pre-service training for not providing them enough opportunities to teach. Trainees and teachers alike believe teaching practice is a valuable component of training. Subjects of Omani studies have also blamed the organisation of their TP, teaching for a day or two during their final year, for failing to provide a clear idea about what a teacher is expected to do, especially with regard to administrative work, testing and grading. The constraints Issa lists are chiefly related to resources provision. In an important issue such as teacher preparation, priorities should be set, especially as Oman has moved away from the simple issue of teacher quantity: with the emphasis now put on preparing qualified teachers, serious steps need to be taken to ensure such quality.

1.6.1.2.2. The Aims and Content of the Teaching Practice Course

The aims of the TP course are to develop the necessary pedagogical and collegiate skills, while introducing trainees to the use of the national curriculum. However, it is notable that these aims, stated clearly in SQU outlines, are formulated using general terms such as “management skills”, “social skills”, and “personal characteristics” without any attempt to define or give examples to what is meant by these. Nor is there any clear explanation of the means employed to achieve such broad aims. This poses many questions with regard to the assessment of trainees during TP, since there are no specific objective guidelines to evaluate trainees’ achievements. Moreover, there is no reference to any cooperative mechanism between SQU and the schools where student teachers do their training and the Ministry of Education. This is despite one of the aims of the College of Education being “to participate with the Ministry of Education in developing the content and objectives of the educational system, as well as teaching methods, educational media, systems of evaluation and examinations, textbook writing and organising in-service courses for teachers at different levels.” (SQU website)

One of the findings of my research is that many teachers feel isolated within the school context, and there is a sense of disjunction or dislocation: it may be that this is endemic within the Omani educational bureaucracy, and that appropriate levels of communication simply have not, as yet, been mastered, nor their importance understood. Lists of rules or aims are happily produced, but their practical significance within a responsive pedagogic community must be doubted.

1.6.1.2.3. Assessment of Trainees in Teaching Practice

During TP, the task of supervising and assessing trainees is shared by a member of the faculty staff from the Curriculum and Teaching Methods Department at the College of Education, the principal and a “cooperating teacher” from the school where training takes place. Supervision is organised so that faculty staff will pay two or three visits to the trainee in the classroom during the 7th term. These increase during the 8th term to between three and five visits. The cooperating teacher attends all the lessons given by the trainee, especially when the university supervisor is not present: the cooperating

teacher's task is to supervise, help and assess. Finally, the school principal assesses the trainee in administrative areas such as attendance, participation in school activities and the degree to which the trainee works with the cooperating teacher and other teachers of the same class. The principal may pay one or two classroom visits. (Issan, 1995: 111-112) Although the College's policy is to provide trainees with supervision and assistance from all these professionals, in reality this is rarely the case. Faculty staff usually make a maximum of two visits per semester, and cooperating teachers and their principals are not, by any means, held responsible for observing or assisting trainees – although they do contribute to the final assessment.

Again this looks like a system that works without adequate and appropriate bureaucratic supervision, and without an appropriate awareness of the parts of the system (principals, teachers) to the whole educational structure. There will in any system be a popular ideology of cynicism from those working in the “real world” regarding the bureaucracy that, nominally, envelops them. In Oman this cynicism is stronger, wider and more problematic, and endemic in a younger population – changing pedagogic training or practice is difficult if principals and teachers have little regard for the system that trains or enforces practice.

1.7. Appointment of New Teachers

After graduation, most novices will teach at the secondary level only after spending two years at the preparatory level. However, depending on the needs of their school or region, they might be required to teach secondary or elementary classes, for which they have not been trained. This can be a frustrating and exhausting experience - they are expected to perform well in an unfamiliar territory. Teaching at secondary level may have two main effects on the novice: as they are teaching an advanced level, it can add to their natural anxieties about teaching; and being of a similar age to their pupils can have a detrimental effect on the authority of a teacher – although it might help them form closer ties with pupils. Because of the location of SQU in Muscat, the teaching practice component is done in the capital's schools, and this may be a very different experience from the interior, in terms of, for example, pupils' attitudes and their English language proficiency: there may be a culture-shock for some novices who come from

other regions.

1.8. An Overview of the Thesis

The thesis divides into four sections. Chapters 1, 2 and 3 create a basic frame of reference: 1 with an overview of Oman, 2 reviewing the available literature, and 3 examining the research methodologies available, and explaining the choices I made. Chapters 4 and 5 lie at the heart of the research: Chapter 4 explains the results of the questionnaires I used, and Chapter 5 applies the results of questionnaires and interviews in a new way to the concept of career stage development. Chapters 6 and 7 drive the observations and data conclusions further, with specific links to gender and teacher satisfaction. Finally, Chapter 8 concludes with some tentative suggestions for pedagogy in general, and teacher training in Oman in particular, as a result of the research data generated.

1.9. Summary of Chapter

This chapter tries to offer an overview of Oman, both in demographic and political-geographic terms, and outlining its unique educational characteristics. Perhaps simplified by the constraints of an overview, I have tried not to be simplistic. Although it should not be assumed that Oman is quite unlike developed countries in every way, there should be an awareness that, in education, there are variations in context, ideology and practice which are very important to the production and analysis of this research. In some ways Oman is a nation of old and traditional practices, with a complex perception of itself; in others, the new Oman, growing up with the influences of global media and changing gender roles, as well as the huge demographic shift towards youth, is very unsure about identity and purpose. Again, this is reflected in the research data and its analysis.

Chapter Two: The Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

Research on teachers in the past saw them as a homogenous group. Teachers were mainly studied to see the impact of teaching on pupils' achievement, and they were shadowy figures in educational research. However, studying teachers has evolved from blaming the teacher, or the teacher as "a victim" to the current vision of the teacher as a "human being" (Ball and Goodson, 1985): focus has shifted to the appreciation of teachers as individuals. "In understanding something so intensely personal as teaching it is critical we know about the person the teacher is." (Goodson, 1992a:4) Studies of teachers which aim to generate understanding of their professional dispositions and personal perspectives on their work can provide useful contributions to the field of teacher education and educational management; "[such studies] can provide a foundation upon which teacher educators can diagnose needs and abilities, offer a guide for ways to support teachers, and help select teacher developmental objectives that focus on short-term or long-term personal growth." (McNergney and Carrier, 1981 cited by Burden, 1990, p.311) Studies can also help us understand teachers' professional needs at different points in their careers, an understanding which may be a basis for teacher development programmes. (Burden, 1990)

It is possible from the literature to discern a number of perspectives in the study of teachers:

1. Examining the changing concerns the teachers have at different phases of their career to explain their actions and attitudes; (e.g. Fuller, 1969; Adams, 1982; Pigge and Marso, 1989 and 1997; Nias, 1989 and Guillaume and Rudney, 1993)
2. Looking at career stages and using these to explain the changes that occur in

teachers as they progress; (e.g. Katz, 1972; Burden, 1990; Huberman, 1992; Christensen and Fessler, 1992 and Day, 1999)

3. Looking at life-cycle as a main factor in explaining the changes that happen to teachers as they grow older and how such cycles may affect teaching careers; (e.g. Sikes, 1985)
4. Investigating levels of teacher career satisfaction; (e.g. Evans and Mass, 1969; Nias, 1981a and 1981b; Chapman, 1983; Kasten, 1984; Johnson, 1986; Evans, 1998 and 1999 and Hean and Garrett, 2001)
5. Looking at factors that affect teachers' development such as their own experiences as pupils. (Lortie, 1975; Cole, 1985; Bynon, 1985; Goodson, 1992a, 1992b and 1992c; Surgrue, 1996 and Hauge, 2000)

The first three perspectives stem from theories of adult development. The concerns and stages theorists assume that human development results from changes in the cognitive structures and/or psycho-social factors, whereas life-cycle theorists argue that age is the most significant factor. The distinction between those perspectives is not totally discrete. In fact, for Nias (1989:66) these developmental formulations have two things in common:

- a. A focus on changes, in teachers or their lives, likely to affect their work;
- b. No conceptualization of teacher development simply as skill development: a view of professional development in which practitioner and person interact.

This review looks at key studies undertaken from these perspectives. The studies have been selected to inform my research and design my research tools. They provide a basis for comparison with results gained from a study of teachers in the specific context of Oman. I reviewed other studies but elected not to use them since they were not based on fieldwork but on earlier studies. Within the literature most studies use developmental stages theory, and focus on trainees' and new teachers' experiences. (e.g. Veenman, 1984; Carre, 1993; McNamara, 1996; Capel, 1998 and Myint San, 1999) Whilst this

literature review does not specifically examine any possible relationships between gender and career development, it will be seen that within the context of my research in Oman, gender does emerge as an important issue within the teaching profession.

2.2. Teacher Concerns

A developmental model of teachers' concerns was drafted by Frances Fuller in 1969. She examined the nature of teachers' concerns, relating research on teachers' problems to that on changes in their expressed concerns. Her first study consisted of intensively studying the concerns expressed by small groups of student teachers as they occurred during a student teaching term. Fuller's second study was with twenty-nine student teachers who were asked to write about their current concerns. Fuller also regroups data from other similar studies: despite the small number of subjects, she proposes a four-stage developmental model of teacher concerns as they progress towards qualification. She sees teachers' concerns passing through sequential and accumulative phases. This will be discussed later in contrast to other work which does not lend wholehearted support to the sequence she develops. (Adams, 1982; Pigge, and Marso, 1989 and Marso and Pigge, 1997) Fuller points out that worries about teaching skills, pupil achievement and pedagogic limitations may not be directly linked to accomplishments. The stages of teacher concerns are:

1. The Pre-teaching Phase: "No Concerns"

During this period the student teacher is not concerned about teaching: he/she worries about academic progress and friends, parents and other "typical-adolescent concerns". (Fuller, 1970)

2. The Early Teaching Phase: "Self Concerns"

Characterized by anxiety about pedagogic performance or adequacy, it is also called the "survival stage" where the teacher is concerned about survival in the classroom. (ibid) This includes worries about classroom discipline and mastery of subject content. In general, the focus of a teacher's attention is the self, not pupils' learning (although teachers may think differently).

3. The Third Phase: “Task Concerns”

During this phase the teacher’s concern is with performance. Focus is on constraints imposed on their teaching, such as pupil numbers and resources.

4. The Late Teaching Stage: “Impact Concerns”

With successful teaching experiences, teachers’ concerns focus on a meaningful and a positive impact on their pupils: concern is with impact of actions on pupils.

When teachers find a technique to survive teaching, they focus on gaining a repertoire of skills; once this is accomplished they focus on their pupils’ learning and progress. Fuller argues that the regularity of the sequence of teachers’ concerns is very useful to teacher educators since this means teacher training programmes can be “tailored to the concerns of prospective teachers as they experience these concerns”. (ibid: p.7) She maintains that teacher educators can increase training relevance, place more responsibility for learning on the student teacher, increase student teachers’ satisfaction with their professional preparation, and produce desirable changes in teachers’ personalities and behaviour.

Although Fuller’s model contains common-sense information, I have a specific difficulty with it. Why did she focus on teachers’ concerns in isolation from the stages passed through over their careers? It seems reasonable to suggest that teachers do have different concerns at different and discrete career stages, and that stages and types of concerns are intimately linked.

Moreover, Fuller’s rigid emphasis on the sequential nature of the model suggests limitations since some studies showed different results with regard to the sequence of such concerns (Adams, 1982; Pigge and Marso, 1989 and Marso and Pigge, 1997). In fact, I find the “impact concerns” phase problematic in that there is no precise definition of what “impact” may be exactly. This could have been the main reason other studies found different results with regard to “impact concerns”.

The model applies mainly to student teachers and teachers at the outset of their careers. Fuller does not provide explanation on how experienced teachers develop or what their

concerns are after achieving new levels of competency. There is also no indication of whether the pre-service programme can influence the nature and order of Fuller’s stages. Nevertheless, the model provides us with a useful insight into teachers’ concerns as they change over time, and this, in turn, provides us with an idea of teachers’ needs at key career points.

Many studies investigate the applicability of Fuller’s concerns model. There were studies of student teachers (Adams, 1982). There were studies of teachers (McArthur, 1980 cited by Pigge and Marso, 1989; and McCullough and Mintz, 1992). Other researchers chose to research both pre-service and in-service subjects (Pigge and Marso, 1997). Table 2.1 lists other prominent studies.

Table 2.1: Studies that Examined Fuller’s (1969) Developmental Model

Researcher/s	Year	Study	Purpose	Sample	Tools
Pigge & Marso	1989	Cross-sectional	Effect of gender and teaching field on trainees’ & teachers’ concerns about teaching	1193 trainees & teachers with up to 5 years experience	1. Teacher Concerns Questionnaire 2. Attitude Towards Teaching as a Career Scale 3. Questions requiring demographic information
Nias	1989	Cross-sectional	Changes in teachers’ concerns and the effect of self image preservation on these concerns	112 primary school teachers with 9-18 years of experience	1. Open-ended and retrospective interviews 2. Teachers’ diaries
Guillaum & Rudney	1993	1 year longitudinal	Changes in elementary student teachers’ concerns	19 student teachers	Journals
Pigge & Marso	1997	7-year longitudinal	Effect of academic abilities and personality attributes on trainees & teachers’ concerns about teaching	60 trainees and teachers with up to 5 years experience	1. Comprehension Test of Basic Skills Scores 2. Teacher Concerns Questionnaire 3. Rotter’s Locus of Control Orientation 4. Myers-Briggs Type Indicator 5. American College Test

Pigge and Marso conducted a series of studies on Fuller's model in the US (e.g. 1989 and 1997). In each of their studies they investigate the effect of various personal and academic characteristics on trainees' and teachers' changing concerns about teaching. Their 1989-study sample is drawn from elementary, secondary, special education and specialized teaching areas. 850 subjects are in their pre-service training while 310 are in-service teachers; 220 are male, 950 female. The sample is divided into (a) three groups of student teachers in a training programme (a group in their second year, another before starting the student teaching and a third after finishing student teaching) and (b) three groups of full time teachers in their first, third and fifth years of teaching. Pigge and Marso use certain research tools (see table 2.1), administered on campus or by post. The questionnaire offers these concerns from 15 items responded to in a continuum from "not concerned" (1) to "extremely concerned" (5). The second tool uses a scale to provide a single score from 11 items to which the subjects responded to a continuum from "strongly agree" (1) to "strongly disagree" (6). The final question also requested information on gender and teaching specialization. I also use a similar cross-sectional methodology for its practicality to compare groups, although longitudinal studies are usually better suited.

The results provided some support for Fuller's model as concerns about survival and self in their study tended to decrease while task type concerns were low but increased as the individuals began teaching. However, contrary to Fuller's model, but consistent with other studies (Adams, 1982) the impact concerns are stable and highest among the three types of concerns over the stages of development studied. The results indicate that changes do occur in teachers' concerns and attitudes towards teaching, and relate to gender and teaching field. Female subjects report more concern about their impact on their pupils and a more positive attitude towards teaching than do male subjects. As for the teaching specializations, those in special education show concerns about impact significantly higher than teachers in other fields. Three patterns of change in concerns are revealed through pre-service and in-service years:

1. Low job-specific concerns early in the pre-service years;
2. An increase in job-specific concerns as the trainees anticipated instructional tasks in later training and actually experienced the complex tasks of instruction in full-time

teaching;

3. A decrease in self-type concerns with additional teaching experience.

This inspired my examination of Omani respondents where I seek to find out whether similar results pertained.

In a longitudinal study, Marso and Pigge (1997) focus on assessing the development of teachers' self, impact and task concerns, as formulated by Fuller. They seek to identify any personal characteristics (indicated by gender, academic major, time of decision to teach, presence or absence of teachers in the family, confidence about the career decision, locus of control orientation and personality preferences) or academic characteristics that might relate to levels and development of concerns about teaching. The sample (54 females and 6 males) were followed from preparation through five teaching years. The data was gathered at five points:

- a) At the beginning of training;
- b) Near the end of teaching practice;
- c) On graduation;
- d) Near the end of the third year; and
- e) Fifth year after graduation.

Importantly, the results of this well-structured study indicate a decrease in self-concerns and an increase in task-concerns as teachers experienced successes. Perhaps as teachers "learn their trade" the emphasis shifts from more general attitudes to specific skills. The study was of particular use in formulating my interview questions and interpreting the data I collected. However, contrary to Fuller's model but in line with other studies (Adams, 1982 and Pigge and Marso, 1989) there is no difference in the degree of the "impact concerns" – those concerns felt by teachers in later stages of their careers, relating to teachers' interest in effecting changes on the pedagogical process and, most specifically, on their pupils. Researchers also find a relationship between the self, impact concern and characteristics of teachers such as gender, personality type and grade point averages. This, I feel, is particularly significant since the change or lack of change in concerns of self and impact concerns can be accurately interpreted only when also considering these other characteristics; the developmental paradigm seems to

suggest an increasing level of altruism, or perhaps an increasing desire to affect the pedagogical environment the more that environment is understood. (There is no relationship found between teachers' concerns and basic academic skills, academic major, family characteristics, American College Test scores or locus of control orientation.)

Although the paradigm offered by Pigge and Marso is generative in the context of much pedagogical research, and certainly my own, a more qualitative approach may have offered a deeper understanding of the processes through which teachers develop. Interviews with the teachers during the different phases of their career might have yielded richer information with regard to how teachers develop and how their needs and concerns change. Also, no precise information was given about the pre-service training course, its length or the point at which teaching practice started. They say it was a seven-year study begun in 1985 but there is no information on when it ended or how they managed to follow teachers from the beginning of their training to five years into their careers (unless the pre-service programme was a two-year programme).

Using a qualitative approach in the form of analysing students' journals, Guillaume and Rudney (1993) conducted a year-long study of 19 student teachers. This generated richer and deeper information, and very useful insights were gained into changing cognitive and perceptual processes – a specificity missing from Pigge and Marso. Student teachers were asked to keep a journal as part of their training programme: they were requested to write a minimum of 3 entries a week, a total of 90 entries for each student teacher. Since subjects themselves chose what to write about, data better reflected their actual concerns. This methodology made me aware that respondents sometimes need to be encouraged subtly. They were asked to write about their teaching experience in general but the specific topics were left for them to choose. The study asks (a) what was the nature of the concerns expressed by elementary student teachers? And (b) what changes were evident in the concerns of student teachers as they progressed through their programme?

The results of the study suggest that student teachers evidence a wide and changing range of concerns as they develop over the year. The relative psychological subtlety of

Guillaume and Rudney is here apparent.

1) Lesson planning and evaluation

The student teachers view of lesson planning widened as they moved through their teaching experience. This demonstrates, in Guillaume and Rudney's view, their acquisition of planning skills. Evaluation of their lessons changed, suggesting a growth toward competence and independence. This change was evident in the criteria used for evaluation. At the beginning they evaluated their lessons on the basis of pupils' enjoyment and control; later they included other criteria such as pacing and learning. (ibid: 74)

2) Discipline

Teachers' concerns move from survival to impact concerns as they gain more confidence in their abilities. "They became more concerned with building a relationship with their pupils based on legitimate authority." (ibid: 74)

3) Working with pupils

Teachers' perceptions of their pupils undergo a significant shift: journals begin to include information about pupils. By the end of their training, teachers treat their pupils as groups rather than individuals.

4) Working with cooperating teachers and adjusting to their classrooms

Student teachers move from focusing on their own needs to considering others' perspectives and adjusting to them. This clearly follows Fuller. Relationships with cooperating teachers reflect increasing confidence in teaching ability. This is evident from their more assertive and critical reactions to cooperating teachers' evaluations of their teaching.

5) Working with others

Student teachers' concern with others such as parents is less evident. Negative comments on substitute teachers may reflect an increasing sense of authority.

6) Transitions from student to professional

This transition is reported in two stages: firstly, student teachers reacted to their

‘sudden experience’ of being a teacher. The abruptness with which full responsibility is assumed by novice teachers given responsibilities equal to those more experienced is a feature Lortie (1975) identifies as unique to the profession. Secondly, their examination of transition from student to professional teacher is based on feelings of success in the classroom, though this transition “did not follow a forward trajectory”. (Guillaume and Rudney, 1993: 76) The researchers suggest “the nature of the ... emphasis within each category did shift as student teachers seemed to develop toward independence.” (ibid: 74)

Guillaume and Rudney’s findings somewhat contradict Fuller’s (1969) developmental model, specifically regarding impact concerns; in their study, student teachers spontaneously expressed concerns about their teaching, their pupils *and* their own survival in the classroom. While overall findings do support Fuller’s idea that student teachers develop over the course of their training, the lesson here is that there is no simple paradigm.

The contradictory findings of Guillaume and Rudney may be attributed to the specific nature of the training programme. This required student teachers to apply what they had learned about teaching materials, curriculum and learning theories in a classroom setting. This, together with the relationships between school and training programme, between trainers and supervisors and cooperating teachers, as well as the emphasis placed by the programme on the trainees’, may have led to task and impact concerns conflated with self concerns. The nature of the training programme could influence, and indeed distort student teachers’ concerns.

Another perspective on Fuller’s model is given by Nias (1989) using the personal accounts of teachers trained in one year post graduate certificate in education (PGCE) courses. Two sets of interviews were conducted - two-thirds Nias’s former students, the rest a random sample. Nias uses Fuller’s model to structure an account of teachers’ careers and professional development, but argues that teachers’ overriding “personal concern” is the preservation of self image. In this way she explains Fuller’s findings by adding a useful element of complexity: such models are only useful if the variables they express can be read subtly, as well as paradigmatically. Nias’s concern is directed to

self, task and impact, and she suggested that “the ways in which teachers experience their work alter in certain respect over time”. (ibid: 66) Impact is thus interpreted in the light of Fuller, but she interprets and deepens the previous study by giving more precise interpretation to “impact”. Her results can be summarized under different teacher “concerns”.

1) Survival Concerns

Almost all study subjects had great doubts initially about personal adequacy. They had the same preoccupations they had during teaching practice. At the end of the first year most felt they could fulfil their obligations once pupils, colleagues; or supervisors with validating capabilities had confirmed their capacity to survive in the classroom.

2) Task concerns (Consolidation and Extension with Teaching)

Teachers expressed relatively high levels of job-satisfaction and talked of feeling “competent”, “extended” and “fulfilled”. (ibid: 70) Their concerns were about the quality of resources and size of classes. They attended practical courses and experimented with different methods of classroom organization and teaching. Discontent was generally caused more by those constraints of school life such as inefficient bureaucracy which appeared to reduce their effectiveness as teachers rather than by teaching itself. Nias believes “it is difficult to relate this phase of task-concerned fulfilment and extension to particular ages or lengths of service.” (ibid: 71) Rather, it depends on an individual’s sense of personal identity and favourable working conditions, which help them pass quickly through earlier phases and establish themselves by the start of the second year. (ibid: 71)

3) Impact Concerns

Some of the sample expressed concerns beyond classroom practice. “They wanted wider responsibilities within the education service, to fulfil their view of themselves as persons of leadership potential and/or educational vision.” (ibid: 72) In other words, they wanted an impact not only on pupils but also on other aspects of the education system. Pupils remained important but were perceived differently from earlier years: by mid-career, more teachers are concerned with making a lasting

impact on pupils.

Nias's qualitative study provides a rich picture of the changes in teachers' concerns during career development. The interest subjects had in non-classroom responsibilities and the impact they made on others besides pupils is not developed in Fuller's model. But Nias, while examining impact concerns, does not relate these to other aspects of teachers' development as adults. Useful extrapolation from her data may help generate more widely applicable paradigms (such as teacher careers in non-European societies). However, there is also paradigmatic narrowness and some puzzlement and confusion created by the methodological processes of this study. First, Nias's sample was taken from successful and committed teachers; this would have an effect on results generated, which might only be applicable to similar groups. Most of the teachers in the second set of interviews were self-selected and this, too, might have an impact on the results. Second, it was not clear whether teachers who kept the diaries were part of the group she interviewed, and while some teachers were observed, it was not evident how those observations contributed to the study.

In a recent study Ghaith and Shaaban (1999) bring an interesting correlation into Fuller's (1969) model of teaching concerns. They examine the relationship between teacher characteristics (gender, grade level taught and experience), personal and general efficacy, and the perception of teaching concerns. Their study aimed at testing the assumption that "high efficacious teachers may have different concerns about their professional practice than their low efficacious counterparts. This is because the more efficacious teachers are more likely to take charge of their own growth and to resolve their problems." (ibid:488) Their sample consisted of 292 Lebanese teachers from various school backgrounds and teaching experience. Their experience range was 36 years with the average being 8.76 years. They completed Gibson and Dembo standard efficacy scale (1984) and Gaith and Yaghi (1997) measure of teaching concerns which was based on Veenman (1984) list of teacher problems and categorised according to Fuller's (1969) teaching concerns.

The results of their study found that experience and personal efficacy was negatively related to teaching concerns. "...teachers who believed in their personal ability to

provide effective teaching that would bring about student learning are less concerned about their self-survival as teachers and about the demands of the teaching task than their less efficacious counterparts.” (ibid:494) Furthermore, and like most studies that examined Fuller’s Model, this study provide ‘partial’ support to for Fuller’s model. It demonstrated that teachers’ self-survival concerns decrease with experience; however, teachers with more experience (15+ years) were also found to be less concerned about all the categories of teaching concerns including the impact concerns. Gaith and Shaaban believe that “teaching concerns are more likely to be context-specific rather than universal.” (ibid:495)

2.3. Teacher Career Stages

In line with research theories on adult development, understanding of teacher development has also shifted. The perspectives I presented at the beginning of this chapter focus on those key aspects of pedagogical development which are unique to teachers. According to Oja (1989) there are two main perspectives to the study of such development: predictable life events or stages as pacers for growth, and age. The former shows how development and maturation consists of a successful adaptation to social expectations during life. It focuses on changes in cognitive structures, behaviour and feelings that are not necessarily age-related. Maturity is considered to be a development towards more complex and abstract types of thinking; age allows the creation of vistas of comparison and an increased ability to sustain a distinct ideological identity. (ibid.) These two perspectives underlie much research on teachers’ career progression. Such research flourished because of the calls to view teachers’ work in relation to and in the context of their lives outside the school environment. (Goodson and Ball, 1985; Beynon, 1985; Goodson, 1992a; Goodson, 1992b; Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992; Kelchtermans, 1993; Goodson, 1994; Hargreaves and Goodson, 1996; Day, 1997 and Goodson, 2000)

Researchers turned to study the lives as well as the work of teachers in an attempt to gain a broader understanding of the development process. “[F]or teachers what goes on inside the classroom is closely related to what goes on outside it. The quality, range and flexibility of teachers’ classroom work are closely tied up with their professional growth

- with the way that they develop as people and as professionals.” (Hargreaves, in Huberman, 1993: vii) As a result of these studies a sequence of pedagogical career stages has emerged. “The idea that a career is composed of stages or compartments sequentially arranged allows us on the one hand to view the teacher’s progression through the various scale posts or, on the other hand, to envisage stages in the total span of the teacher’s career.” (Lyons, 1981: 16) Sikes, Measor and Woods (1985: 227) shared this paradigm: “it is possible to discern a life-cycle common to most teachers, with distinctive phases and tasks attaching to them.” Further, Sikes (1985: 28) argues that “research ... has variously shown that different experiences, attitudes, perceptions, expectations, satisfactions, frustrations, concerns, etc. appear to be related to different phases of the teacher’s life and career cycle.” In other words, the journey from enthusiasm to frustration is made up of a continuous interaction of smaller and distinctive cycles, each of which contain some elements of both, and each of which demonstrate both in very different ways with various different effects.

Although a relatively recent phenomenon, the study of teachers’ career phases started to attract the interest of many researchers in the 1970s and 1980s. Some conducted fieldwork to arrive at their own categorization of teachers’ career stages while others arrived at their own through extensive review of the available literature on this issue. While earlier models depicted changes along a continuum (Katz, 1972; Field, 1979; Burden, 1982 cited by Burden 1990; Fieman-Nemser, 1983; and Furlong and Maynard, 1995) and consisted of a few limited and very broad stages (figure 2.1), later models were more detailed, accounting for teacher development from the time of their pre-service training through to career exit.

Figure 2.1: Abstraction of Various Models of Broad Continuous Career Stages

Self-centred (concern with survival) Subject-centred Less confidence Feeling under pressure Feelings of inadequacy Teaching through trial and error A rather idealistic view of teaching	Learner-centred Learning-centred More confidence Relaxed and enjoy work more Feelings of competence Greater professional knowledge A more realistic view of teaching
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A major weakness of such early models is the concentration on pre-service and the initiation period of the teaching career, while they grouped all experienced teachers homogeneously and failed to show whether or how these teachers continue to develop. Table 2.2 illustrates four, more detailed models. A comparison with figure 2.1 shows the shift to multi-phase models of development, with a brief account of the types of study, samples and tools used.

Table 2.2: Models of the Ages and Stages of Teacher Career Development

Researcher/s	Year	Study	Sample	Tools	Model
Sikes	1985	Cross-sectional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 48 English secondary teachers Novices, experienced and retired teachers Age ranges between 25-70 Male & female teachers of art and science 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews/ Life history method 	A 5-phase model based on age group: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 21-28 age group 28-33 age group 33-40 age group 40-50/55 age group 50-55+ age group
Huberman	1992	Cross-sectional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 160 Swiss lower and upper secondary school teachers Four experience groups chosen: 5-10, 11-19, 20-29 and 30-39. Random sample Different subjects Male & female teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open-ended interviews/ life history 3-9 hours divided into two sessions 	A 7-phase model based on career stage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career entry Stabilization Experimentation and diversification The reassessment phase Serenity and relational distance Conservatism and complaints The disengagement phase
Fessler & Christensen	1992	Cross-sectional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews 	An 8-phase model based on career stages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-service Induction Competency building Enthusiastic and growing Career frustration Stability Career wind-down Career exit
Day	1999	Review of literature	_____	_____	A broad 5-phase model based on career stage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launching a career: initial commitment Stabilization: final commitment

Researcher/s	Year	Study	Sample	Tools	Model
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New challenges • Reaching a professional plateau • The final phase

2.3.1. Sikes’s Model

Within the life age framework, Sikes (1985) uses Levinson et al’s (1978) conceptualization of life development as a supporting framework and to provide a structure for the presentation of her results. Sikes argues that “like everyone else [teachers] are subject to biological and psychological changes which are associated with aging and how the person is viewed in this society.” (ibid: 57) Using the life history method, which asks subjects to talk about their life stories, Sikes follows the life cycle of 48 secondary school teachers from the probationary year through to retirement. On the basis of her study, Sikes provides a five-phase model of teachers’ lives defined in terms of age.

1. Phase One: 21-28 Age Group

The individual enters the adult world, choosing a career and committing themselves to it. Sikes explains that teachers at this stage “do not see themselves as committed to a lifelong career in teaching”. (ibid: 30) On the whole, and for the majority of the early career teachers, immediate concern is survival and coping with the job; many get a reality shock. In order to survive they must learn the ‘craft’. During this period, maintaining discipline is one of the main problems because the ‘natural authority of age’ is absent. Many young teachers turn to good relationships with pupils to compensate. Over time, teachers become more concerned with their subject, which provides a sense of security: after all, they are specialists, and their specialism helps create identity. Teachers usually “...evolve their own pedagogy through a mixture of trial and error, from observing others ... by remembering their own teachers ... and from their own idea of what it should be like. The majority say that their professional training, apart from teaching practice, was of very limited practical value.” (ibid: 36)

2. Phase Two: 28-33 Age Group

As life becomes more anchored with responsibilities “it becomes more important to establish a stable basis and work and plan a life structure for the future.” (ibid: 44) It can be a stressful period, especially after 30, as it becomes increasingly difficult to start out on a new career. It is “a last chance to assess and subsequently confirm or change one’s provisional life structure” (ibid: 44) and some teachers will either “leave or begin to consider or explore alternatives to teaching.” (ibid: 44). Promotion becomes important and teachers feel capable of taking on more responsibilities, but teaching is not as satisfying or challenging as it was when they started. Discontent may be exacerbated because of increasing anxiety to achieve age appropriate positions, or familial commitments that demand money. Money becomes more important if the job proves unsatisfactory. As it becomes difficult to maintain a subject-specialist identity in the school environment, teachers in this group grow more relaxed but less interested in their subject. One reason for this shift, which on the surface looks unusual and unpredictable, is that people tend to accept status quos, but then such acceptance is antithetical to pedagogical commitment.

3. Phase Three: 33-40 Age Group

Sikes believes teachers are now at their peak, displaying energy, involvement, ambition and self-confidence. During this period gender differences affect careers as men aim at establishing a social niche while many women put careers second to roles as wives and mothers. “Those who do not conform may face social censure. Women who have a family and who continue to work are often under great pressure insofar as they have two jobs.” (ibid: 48) Many teachers will opt for shifts into bureaucracies, although some might deny this was a strategy to protect their self-image if they fail to achieve promotion. Pupils’ attitudes and behaviour change toward teachers who are no longer from the same generation. The relationship becomes more parental, more relaxed and natural. Teachers become more critical of pupils’ standards, attitudes and behaviour and compare them unfavourably to past pupils.

4. Phase Four: 40-50/55 Age Group

Sikes argues that teachers in this group experience mid-life crises. “Crucially it is during this phase that it becomes apparent whether or not the work of establishing occupational career, family and identity begun in the twenties and thirties has been successful; and it tends to involve self reappraisal, questioning what one has made of one’s life and searching for ways of expressing, fulfilling and satisfying oneself in the future.” (ibid: 52). Relationships with pupils becomes definitively parental and teachers may also act similarly to younger colleagues. (ibid: 52) Teachers of this group are considered authority figures and take on roles of maintainers and guardians of school traditions.

5. Phase Five: 50-55+ Age Group

The major task for this group is preparation for retirement. This starts even if their morale is high as energy and enthusiasm decline. Towards the end of their career, teachers become freer in their attitudes and discipline: their authority and experience has taught them the primacy of pupils’ learning. Relationships with others in the school change, as pupils reject and distance themselves from older teachers. Young teachers view their pedagogy as outdated. Often the knowledge and experience of older teachers are not sought out or made use of.

Sikes’s study yields interesting results, clearly identifying stages through which teachers pass, but rather too closely links these to a chronologically defined age measure. Perhaps these approaches owe a little too much to the developmental models of Piaget or Freud, with periods seen as discrete chambers: each passed through before the door of the next can be unlocked. This may be problematic for a wider understanding when considering the development of human relationships to and through careers. Not all teachers start teaching at the same age; not all continue teaching along consecutive stages; there may be interruptions to the contiguity; some teachers drop in and out of teaching; different types of teacher may experience different stresses and thus developments. However, my own research results did to some extent follow Sikes’s model (see 5.2.3.4). Gender differentiation also is rather crude, especially facing the ideological changes of Twenty-first century life. There are also important exterior considerations of micro and macropedagogical environments Sikes fails to address:

what of political changes that lead to bureaucratic changes? While age is an important factor, it may not always be a useful measure on its own. (Oja, 1989) Subtlety is lost as soon as abstract categorizing takes place: teachers may experience all those feelings described at each stage at any stage of their careers, while problems of pedagogy may vary very widely.

2.3.2. Huberman's Model

Huberman's study led to some educational reforms in Switzerland. In contrast to Sikes, he chooses a much larger sample which he looks at according to length of experience based on career stage rather than age. Whereas Sikes study may not have accurately reflected the subtlety of career stages, Huberman's approach may redress through depth and detail. Huberman provides a comprehensive seven-phase pattern of the teaching career, using interviews as the main research tool. The interview contained 14 open-ended questions and respondents were asked to reflect on their career trajectory, identify key themes and put these in steps to capture the "flow" of their professional experience. The themes generated were of two types: Metaphoric (for example, sink or swim) and personal, familial or administrative themes (before receiving a contract, after a marriage).

Huberman's study (Figure 2.2) is one of the most important on teacher career stages. When choosing the sample the use of different variables such as level, sex and teaching experience provides useful grounding, especially when differences occur, for example between male and female teachers. The study provides valuable data on the processes of development; using a qualitative method on a large number of respondents ensures that results have both depth and can be generalized. Width, depth and detail is also present in Christensen and Fessler (1992) but Sikes (1985), while offering insights, is not so easily generalized into the working teacher population as a whole. Huberman's model of career stages (numbers 1-8 are uniquely valuable insights, both for my research and more generally) is key to this generalizability.

1. Career Entry: This involves elements of (1) survival and discovery, somewhat "uniform" among beginners. "[T]he survival aspect is to do with [2] 'reality shock',

with the initial complexity and uncertainty of the classroom environment, continuous trial and error, preoccupation with self ... the discrepancy between educational ideals and classroom life.” (Huberman, 1993:5) The element of discovery “explains enthusiasm of the beginner, the ‘headiness’ of finally being in the position of responsibility ... or of seeing oneself as a colleague within a guild of professionals.” (ibid:5) Survival and discovery are experienced in parallel, the former facilitated by the latter. There are moments when either is dominant, as well as periods of “indifference”.

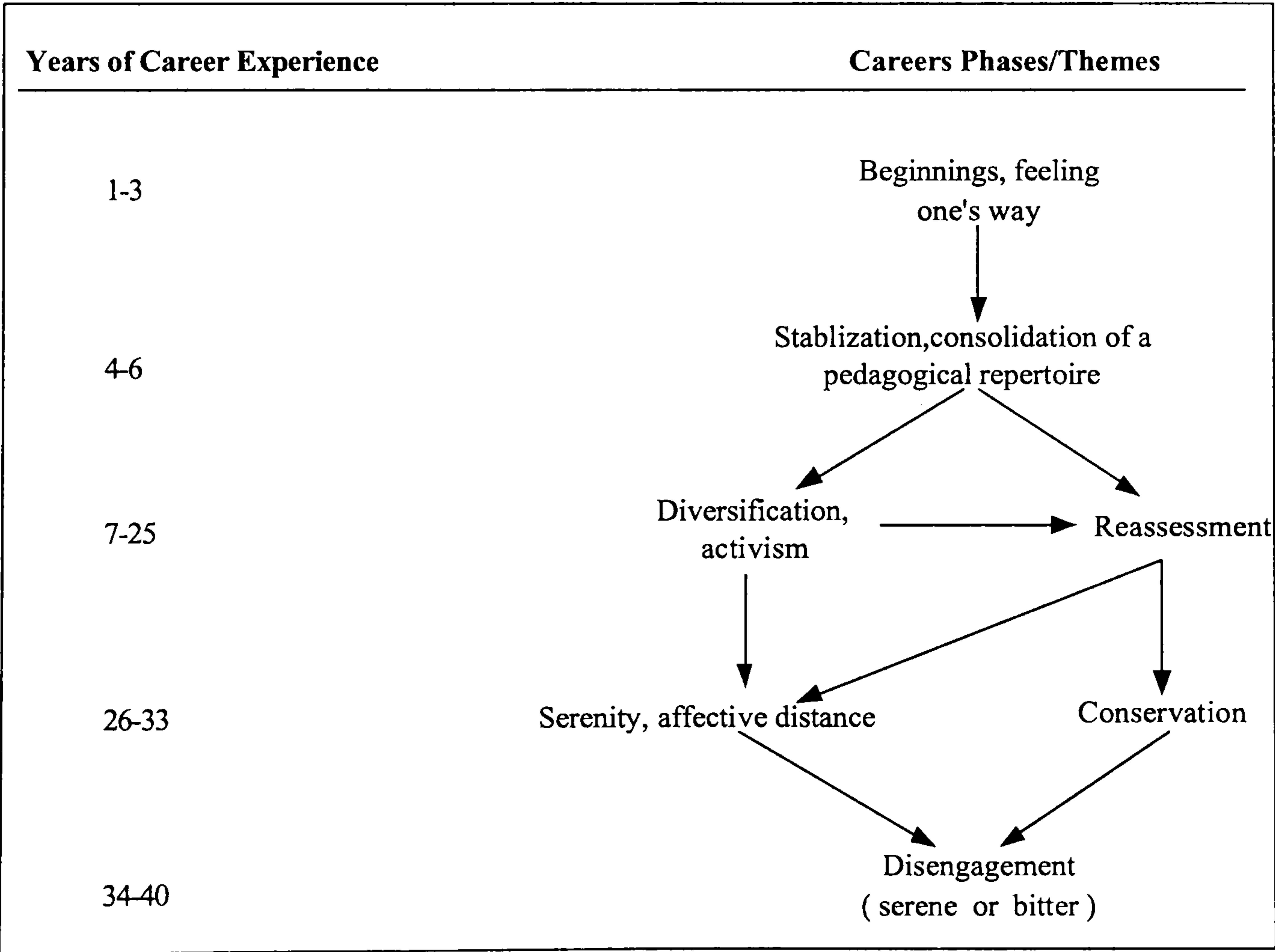
2. **The Stabilization Phase:** A phase of “commitment”, “stabilization” and “responsibility”. “[I]t is a matter of affirming a single and subjective choice; that is, the decision to commit oneself to the order of teaching.” (ibid: 6) This commitment is sustained for at least 8 to 10 years. Teaching increases confidence (3) and weakens self-absorption. Teachers refine their pedagogic repertoire and feel better equipped (4), more at ease and relaxed in the classroom.
3. **The Experimentation and Diversification Phase:** Teachers during this phase are very active, ambitious and seek challenges. They have already mastered basic teaching skills and experiment (5) with others which earlier they wouldn’t have been self-confident enough to do. Teachers want to have a high impact on their pupils.
4. **The Reassessment Phase:** A phase characterized by self-doubt, though the degree varies. This phase gives way to period of uncertainty or a sense of routine (6) emerges from the stabilization phase onward. Huberman argues that it is difficult to draw a common profile for this stage: “reassessment would be a single phase or one of several archetypal phases in one’s life, as set against one’s objectives and initial ideals.” However, “there is no indication at all in the empirical literature that the majority of teachers pass through a phase of uncertainty.” (ibid: 9)
5. **The Serenity and Relational Distance Phase:** Some teachers report being at ease in the classroom and less vulnerable to the opinions of others (7). Levels of ambition decline but teachers are more confident and serene (8). There is less need to control

others or drive oneself, a greater tolerance of ones' limits or weaknesses and a greater acceptance of the "inevitability" of life trajectory. (Huberman, 1995) There is also a greater distance from pupils as a factor of generational distance.

6. The Conservatism and Complaints Phase: Teachers reach this stage along different routes, perhaps as an extended period of self-doubt. “There is, probably, a general change in attitude relative to the future - less of a quest for what one doesn’t have, more protection of what one already has.” (ibid: 11)

6. The Disengagement Phase: “The classical literature of the human life cycle postulates a gradual withdrawal and ‘interiorization’ near the end of the professional career. The general tone is relatively positive. One detaches oneself progressively ...” (ibid 11-12) Huberman maintains that “a distinct phase of ‘disengagement’ has not been clearly demonstrated in research on teaching.”

Figure 2.2: Huberman’s (1993:13) Model



2.3.3. Fessler and Christensen's Model

In an attempt to produce a working model to help plan teacher development, Christensen and Fessler (1992 and Fessler, 1995) propose one based on analysis of the literature and extensive interviews with teachers. Their model (Figure 2.3) offers "... a comprehensive and expanded picture of the career cycle ... by placing [it] into the context of influences from personal and organizational factors" and "presents a view of teacher career cycle that is dynamic and flexible, rather than static and fixed." (ibid: 34) These studies are prominent because they offer the only in-depth, generative models of the subject. This is the key differentiating element, and one to be acknowledged by any similar research. Again, the clear comparison is with Sikes, and although there are some similarities with Huberman, the stages may offer researchers a more open categorization of the personal behind teacher development. Building on this insight, the model shows non-linear career progression, a dynamic responding to personal and organizational influences. Because there are many interacting environmental influences that might have a positive or a negative effect on the teachers' development, Fessler and Christensen divided them into three. "Personal environment" includes interactive variables (family, critical incidents, and life-crises) which might impact individually or in combination, and may influence pedagogic behaviour and career cycle. "Organizational environment" refers to the school and its system (factors such as rules, management style, public trust, social expectations, professional organizations and unions). "Career stages" were determined on data gathered during the model-building process, represent the "norms" and "serve as a valuable way of thinking about career stages". (ibid: 32) There are eight career stages.

1. **Pre-service:** initial preparation that usually takes place in college. It can also be retraining for a new role or assignment.
2. **Induction:** the first years of employment, when the teacher is socialized into the system. At this stage, teachers need to feel accepted by pupils, colleagues and supervisors. Teachers who change level, building or school can also experience this.
4. **Competency Building:** teachers aim at improving and mastering skills. They look

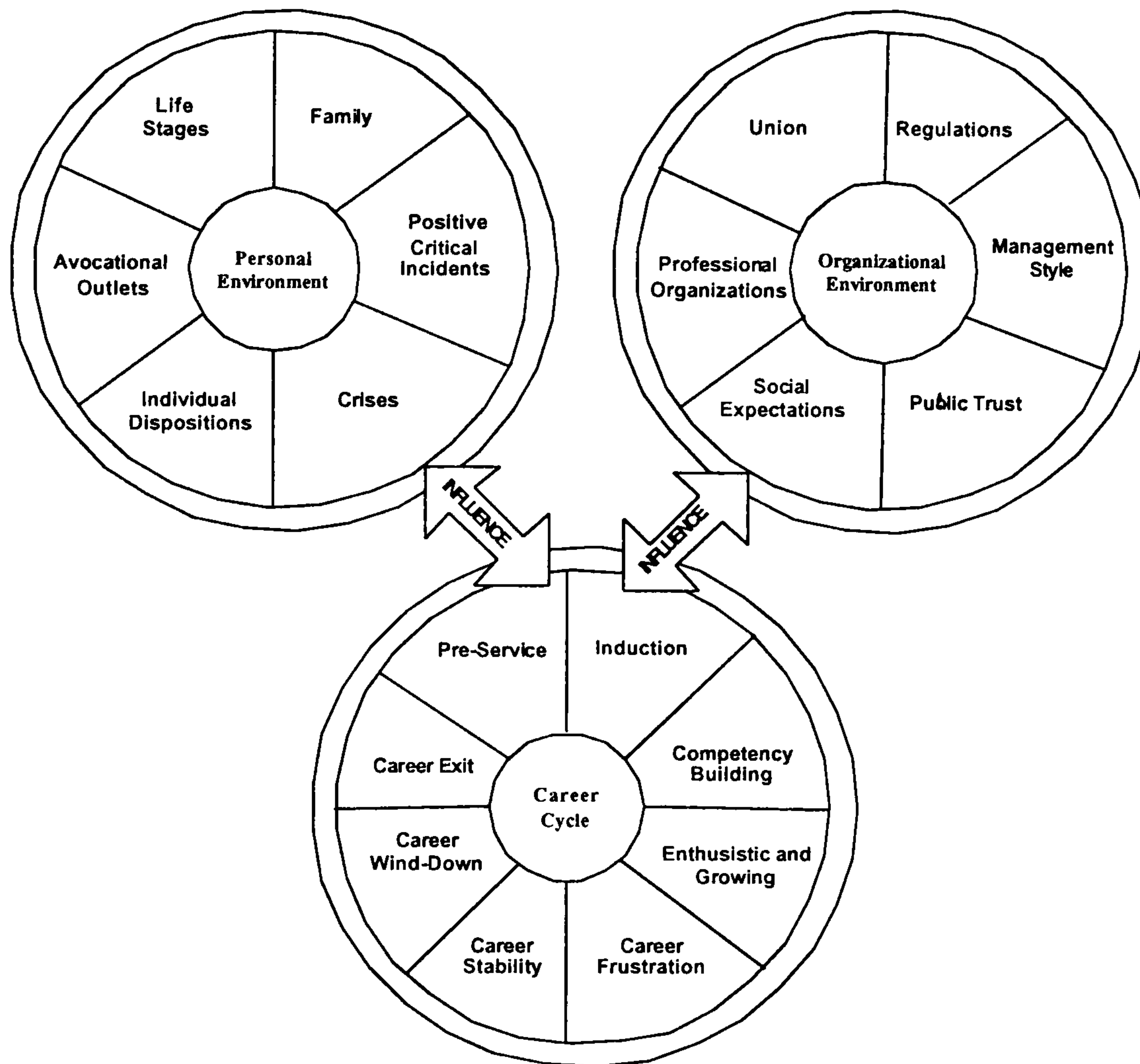
for new ideas and ways of implementation.

4. **Enthusiastic and Growing:** teachers master pedagogic skills, and progress as professionals. They are enthusiastic and enjoy high levels of job satisfaction.
5. **Career Frustration:** teachers question their career choice. Teacher burn-out may occur during mid-career (it may also occur in earlier years). This is a new idea not referred to elsewhere; “stagnation” is used to suggest something similar, but does not communicate the level of disconnection so aptly described here. Burnout is an important concept for my research.
6. **Stability:** teachers reach a professional plateau in the process of disengaging from commitment to teaching. They do what is expected, but no more.
7. **Career Wind-Down:** preparation to leave the profession; a period with either positive or negative feelings, it may last from a few weeks to several years.
8. **Career Exit:** after the teacher leaves the job, this can be a period of unemployment, pursuit of alternative careers or movement to a non-teaching position in education (such as administration).

Fessler and Christensen’s model is one of the most comprehensive. Besides addressing the main stages both beginning and experienced teachers go through in their careers, it is the only model that addresses factors that impact teacher development and career stage progression. It is useful for assessing teacher development over the different career stages. However, details of the research methodology, such as selection and characteristics of the teachers interviewed, procedures for data collection and data analysis, were not evident.

Figure 2.3: Fessler and Christensen's (1992:36) Model

Dynamics of the Teacher Career Cycle



2.3.4. Day's Model

Although the model postulates by Day (1999) is based solely on his review of the literature, I elected to discuss it in my review of the literature because it offers an interesting insight. Day offers a comprehensive, detailed and novel model, suggesting that some teachers will have a smooth entry into their careers, and that this will have consequences for their career development. This explained much of my data, and illuminated some responses which, otherwise, may have failed to be generative. Day identifies five broad developmental phases, four of which are the most important.

1. Launching a Career: Initial Commitment

It is a crucial period, during which novice teachers establish definitions of teaching and particular views of professionalism. They might have an 'easy' or 'painful' novitiate, depending on:

- Ability to deal with classroom organization and management problems;
- Curriculum and pedagogical content knowledge; and
- Influences from the school and staff-room cultures.

The initial stage is a dialogue between self and environment, a dialogue in which the self is still in the process of adapting to or struggling against pedagogic realities. “The first few years of teaching have been described as a two-way struggle in which teachers try to create their own social reality by attempting to make their work match their personal vision of how it should be, whilst at the same time being subject to the powerful socialization forces of the school.” (Day, 1999: 59)

2. Stabilization: Final Commitment

Most teachers experience a sense of pedagogic ‘mastery’ and are accepted by other teachers as experienced colleagues. This is coupled with a feeling of security in their knowledge of subject matter and identity as members of the school community. This feeling of growing maturity can be accompanied “by some consolidation, refinement and extension of teaching repertoires and possibly, involvement in a broader range of in-school and out-of-school educational developments as their vision of ‘being a professional’ evolves and broadens.” (ibid: 61) This phase may lead to a stalling of development in knowledge, skills and commitment and ultimately to stagnation and decline. Teachers at this stage may need “new stimulation, new ideas ... deeper commitments, new challenges”. (ibid: 61)

3. Reaching a Professional Plateau

There is diversity in the mid-phase of the career cycle, related to career advancement, school culture and response to routine. Many teachers seek new challenges and other responsibilities grow - especially family responsibilities. Some teachers may experience mid-life crises and increasing levels of disenchantment, perhaps due to lack of promotion, role change or diminishing levels of energy and enthusiasm. This period is also characterized by a lower need to control others or drive oneself, and a greater tolerance for ones’ limits or weaknesses.

4. The Final Phase

In the final 10 to 15 years of a career, teachers enjoy greater expertise but also increased concerns for health and family. Teachers are more conservative and sceptical, and unlikely to look for promotion: they do not have the same levels of enthusiasm or emotional and intellectual commitment.

2.3.5. Teacher Concerns and Career Stages: Conclusion

Across the studies there is a tension between a lack of generative description, and a tendency to categorizational prolixity. There is a clear overlap between concerns and career stages: both suggest a gradient from initial experience through the development of experience towards cynicism, distraction and tiredness. Age, career stage and concerns come out as elements in the definition of teacher development. The lesson is to understand the need for culturally-defined asymmetries of influence (the distraction of family may be greater in Oman than in the UK) as well as gaining some kind of balance that admits the most generative elements of each study methodology. However, there are other factors within the school environment and educational social context, which I will look at next.

2.4. Job Satisfaction

Originating in the business sector, research on job satisfaction was started in the 1930s by Hoppock (1935, cited by Evans and Maas, 1969). At first, economists were reluctant to study this issue because of the subjective nature of responses, until job satisfaction was established to be essential to work productivity: “linking an individual’s evaluation of job satisfaction to their subsequent behaviour, provides a strong justification for utilising subjective assessments of job satisfaction in explaining labour market behaviour.” (Sloane and Ward, 2001: 787) Research on job satisfaction in the 1930s and 1940s focused on this relationship; “if workers were more satisfied with their jobs, productivity, and therefore profitability, would improve.” (Spinelli and Gray, 1998: 12) In addition to productivity and profitability, workers’ attendance and desire to remain in the organisation were found to be determined by levels of job satisfaction. (Metle, 2001)

In general, according to Carroll (1969) research on job satisfaction moved through three stages determined by the foci of the studies in this field. The earliest attempts were to determine the general proportions of satisfied and unsatisfied workers. Later, attempts were made to correlate certain characteristics such as age, education, marital status and sex with the satisfied/dissatisfied dichotomy, and finally with “establishing a direction and explanation of causality in these correlations, and thus defining the ‘determinants’ of job satisfaction....” (ibid: 4) Research focus has changed from focus on “extrinsic” factors (relating to the employee’s work environment) to “intrinsic” factors (related to the job being done) and further to issues of the employee’s personality, expectations and needs. “There was a synthesis between the analysis of the nature of the work role and that of individual characteristics. Satisfaction analysis now required both variables, the man [sic] and the job, to be in a state of simultaneous and dynamic interaction.” (Carroll, 1969: 4)

2.4.1. What is Job Satisfaction?

The biggest problem facing research on job satisfaction is the lack of a consensus on what it is; one is reminded of a famous warning. “The first business of every theory is to clear up conceptions and ideas which have been jumbled together, and ... entangled and confused; and only when a right understanding is established, as to names and conceptions, can we hope to progress with clearness and facility. ...” (Clausewitz, 1986: 179). Unfortunately, there is no agreed definition and this creates problems for research and in the analysis of data. (Carroll, 1969 and Spinelli and Gray, 1998) Evans (1997, 1998a, 1998b, 1999, 2001) recognises the problems of a lack of agreed definition. “A range of definitions is evident, and the disparity amongst these relates both to the depths of analyses of the concept and to interpretations of it. Moreover, not all of what are passed off as definitions are actual definitions. Some are merely descriptions of possible consequences of job satisfaction, or lists of its characteristics.” (Evans, 1998: 8) This conceptual and methodological confusion makes research difficult: if researchers fail to define concepts adequately, then their subjects’ responses may be unclear. “Problems of construct validity potentially arise when researchers fail to provide a clear indication of what they mean by the term, or when they fail to clarify how research subjects interpret the concept.” (ibid.: 6) Construct validity cannot be gained when conceptual ambiguity

allows no clear distinction between experiences that are “satisfactory” and those that are “satisfying”: clearly researchers have to be aware of basic Maslovian distinctions in order to be able to create any workable social theory. (Maslow, 1970) Are the needs met by a job that is “satisfactory” more basic than the needs met by one that is “satisfying”? Does it come lower on a hierarchy of needs? It seems that satisfactoriness is more of a “safety need”, while satisfaction suggests an “esteem need” – the highest level of need in Maslow’s hierarchy. Clearly the fact that the words are similar does not help. More confusion is added when researchers carelessly use subjective terms such as “morale”, which mean very different things in different contexts: “frames of reference” are problematic when not taken properly into consideration. (Katzell, 1964)

Allowing for these problems concerning the exact meaning of the term “job satisfaction”, there are nevertheless some common definitions which have informed research. The first published definition was offered by Hoppock (1935) and is basic: “any combination of psychological, physiological and environmental circumstances that may cause a person to truthfully say ‘I am satisfied with my job’”. (Hoppock cited in Spinelli and Gray, 1998: 13) This definition provides an indication of the constituent aspects of job satisfaction. Some definitions are based on the notion that job satisfaction means the fulfilment of individual needs (Schaffer (1953) and Sergiovanni (1968) both cited in Evans, 1998), others such as Lawler (1973, cited in Evans, *ibid*) focus on the individual’s *expectations* of a job and the extent to which these expectations are achieved as the determinants of satisfaction. Locke (1969) views the achievement of job satisfaction with that of “job values”. Lortie (1975) and Nias (1981b) interpret job satisfaction in terms of rewards received. Clearly social, political and cultural elements play significant roles in determining which of these definitions may be most powerful at any single historical period.

Looking at the different available definitions of the term helps explain the complications created by different frames of reference chosen by individual researchers defining job satisfaction. “The repercussions of [different frames of reference] ... are far-reaching since they have a potential impact upon any study that aims to investigate what influences job satisfaction.” (Evans, 1998: 5) What is needed is “... a definition of job satisfaction which incorporates and clarifies the ambiguity of the term...” (*ibid*: 10)

2.4.2. Herzberg's Theory of Job Satisfaction

Traditionally, the study of job satisfaction was based on the assumption that “if the presence of a variable in the work situation leads to satisfaction, then its absence will lead to job dissatisfaction, and vice versa”. (Ewan et al.; 1966 cited by Carroll, 1969) Herzberg, Mausner and Snyderman (1959) suggest a “two-factor theory” which challenges traditional views of job satisfaction. Herzberg's theory (table 2.3) is based on his study of accountants and engineers. Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews, in which employees were asked to relate to an incident connected with an extremely good or bad time in their job. Two distinct sets of factors emerge: factors which are “intrinsic” or “motivators”, (work itself, responsibilities, achievement and advancement) and “extrinsic” or “hygiene” factors (company policy and administration, interpersonal relations, working conditions, and technical supervision). Herzberg's theory suggests there are certain things in a job that people are satisfied with and others they are dissatisfied with. However, factors that cause satisfaction are not necessarily the same as those which cause dissatisfaction. He identifies factors that cause satisfaction as “intrinsic” and relate to the actual content of the work; the factors that cause dissatisfaction are “extrinsic” and mainly relate to the environment and company policy. Five specific motivation factors (satisfiers) are identified: achievement, recognition (for achievement), responsibility, advancement and the work itself. Three main factors came under the hygiene factors (dissatisfiers) and these were salary, supervision and interpersonal relations. Herzberg argues that the motivation factors or satisfiers have the potential to provide job satisfaction. Herzberg's theory maintains that the opposite of satisfaction is not dissatisfaction but “no satisfaction”, and the opposite of dissatisfaction is not satisfaction but “no dissatisfaction”. Hygiene factors are capable of creating dissatisfaction but are not capable of satisfying - except in the case of a minority of “hygiene seekers”, those employees more interested in the materialistic benefits of the job. Herzberg argues that “hygiene” factors can only work preventatively but never as a cure (so a higher salary can stave off dissatisfaction, but will not create satisfaction).

Table 2.3: Evans and Maas's (1969) summary of Herzberg's 'Two-Factor' Theory (modified)

The Factor	What is it?	Extrinsic or Intrinsic
Recognition	An act of notice, praise or blame	Primary Satisfier
Achievement	The successful completion of a job, solutions to problems, seeing the results of one's work, etc.;	Primary Satisfier
Advancement	Actual change in status or position of person in the company	Primary Satisfier
Salary	Any material compensation	Primary dissatisfier
Interpersonal relations	Personal interaction between superior, subordinate, peer and the individual in the work situation	Primary dissatisfier
Supervision-technical competence-incompetence or fairness-unfairness of supervisor	Included in this category were willingness or unwillingness to delegate responsibility or willingness or unwillingness to teach	Primary dissatisfier
Responsibility	The individual responsibility and authority given to the person or lack of it	Primary satisfier
Company policy and management	The overall adequacy of company organization and the positive or negative effects of company policies, primarily personnel policies	Primary dissatisfier
Working conditions	Physical conditions of work, amount of work and facilities available for performing work	Primary dissatisfier
Work itself	The actual doing of the job or tasks of the job	Primary satisfier

Influential as it is, Herzberg's 'two-factor' theory has come under criticism. Carroll (1969: 7) suggests a theory bound to one methodology is weak and lacks flexibility in explaining differences in the needs of individuals. Importantly for any examination of teacher satisfaction, Evans (1998a and 1999) argues that hygiene factors *do* influence how satisfactory a job is considered to be, while motivational factors relate to the *extent* to which work is satisfying, and suggests that Herzberg did not really acknowledge this distinction explicitly. Based on her studies of teacher job satisfaction, Evans questions the components of the two-factor theory. She argues that all five motivation factors can be reduced to one single factor - "achievement". Hygiene factors can work as "either contributors to, or/and reinforcers of achievement": although recognition is often reported by teachers to be satisfying when received, it will not have any effect if the teacher does not feel they deserve to be recognised for their work; in other words has a sense of achievement. Evans suggests the term "job satisfaction" should in fact be divided into two separate concepts: "job comfort" (which Herzberg identifies as "hygiene") and "job fulfilment". The former "relates to the extent to which the

individual feels comfortable in his/her job. More specifically, it is about the extent to which the individual is satisfied with, but not by, the conditions and circumstances of his/her job.” (ibid: 11) Job fulfilment, on the other hand, is “a state of mind encompassing all the feelings determined by the extent of the sense of personal achievement which the individual attributes to his/her performance of those components of his/her job which s/he values ... it is ultimately about the individual’s self-perception of achievement, rather than more objective evaluation of whether or not achievement has occurred.” (ibid: 11-12) Evans says that Herzberg’s view that the removal of “hygiene factors” does not lead to job satisfaction is a result of his failure to recognise that job comfort is “entirely separate, conceptually, from job fulfilment”. (ibid: 12) She argues that if he had recognised this, he might have realised that the removal of “dissatisfiers” does result in a type of job satisfaction called “job comfort” but not “job fulfilment”. Also Evans suggests there are both negative and positive job comfort factors, although Herzberg mentions the negative only. The positive factors are “those aspects of their work teachers are satisfied with, but not by; they are satisfactory, but not satisfying.” (ibid: 144) Interestingly in terms of any study of teacher job satisfaction, she suggests the reason Herzberg only looked at dissatisfaction “lies with individuals’ natural predisposition towards highlighting the unsatisfactory features of work rather than the satisfactory ones”. (ibid: 146) This effect may be exacerbated in a situation where socio-political constraints operate, however subtly, against the interests of any particular group of workers.

2.4.3. Teacher Job Satisfaction

The issue of job satisfaction is important: what are individuals’ attitudes to their jobs and how do such attitudes get articulated in the degrees of involvement, effort and time invested? Commitment and motivation are affected by how employees feel in terms of the degree of value fulfilment, needs and/or expectations met. Succinctly, the decision to continue in a career is directly affected by the degree of satisfaction felt. Research has found teacher job satisfaction impacts on pedagogic quality and schools’ ability to retain staff, and on organisational commitment, performance and effectiveness. (Ostroff, 1992 and Bogler, 2002) Such research is a fairly new area and according to Nias (1981a) much is not helpful. Despite this, a body of literature is emerging because

teachers' levels of job satisfaction have implications not only on the quality of performance but also on the quality of learning and, therefore, ultimately on students' achievements. "Studies show that improvement in teacher motivation has benefits for students as well as teachers." (Bishay, 1996:147) Therefore, research has two objectives: a direct one concerned with teachers and an indirect but nevertheless important one concerned with pupils' learning and achievement.

To add to the conceptual and methodological problems resulting from a lack of an agreed definition, research on teachers' job satisfaction could have theoretical difficulties. Applying wider theories of job satisfaction to pedagogy is problematic because of its distinctiveness. Two researchers' work has had the most impact on the current conceptualisation of teacher job satisfaction. Nias's (1981a and 1981b) and Evans's (1997, 1998a, 1998b, 1999 and 2001) studies on English primary school teachers provides a better understanding but, since both investigate only primary teachers, one should be conscious of limitations. Both examine and reinterpret Herzberg's "Two-Factor" theory. Nias (1981a) believes that Herzberg is simplistic and the theory cannot be directly applied to pedagogy because the work itself includes involvement in the school as a social system. She recognises the dissatisfiers of pay, career structure and physical conditions as truly environmental, "hygiene" factors. She argues that in teaching, job satisfaction involves more than the work-focused satisfiers Herzberg identified and proposes a new category called "negative satisfiers"; these include inefficient administration, uncongenial colleagues, lack of participation in the agreement of ends and means, and poor communication. Nias claims that if these factors can be improved then job satisfaction will increase independent of the extrinsic factors. The reason for Nias's calling the category "negative satisfiers" is unclear.

Evans's splitting of the term job satisfaction into "job comfort" and "job fulfilment" is a step forward in understanding Herzberg's hygiene and motivation factors in relation to pedagogy. Feeling unsatisfied with a job does not mean that an employee lacks any positive feelings towards it. The applicability of research findings is doubted by those who see teaching as an atypical occupation. (Popleton, 1988 and Evans, 1998) More research is needed to build the theoretical, conceptual and methodological bases.

The specific nature of teaching as a service career that takes place in a social context colours teachers' whole experience. The presence of social relations in a school is a very important feature of teaching: research shows teachers attach great importance to working with students and to the relationships they form within the profession. (Nias, 1981a and 1981b and Huberman, 1993) Most research has been concerned with two main areas:

1. Elements that facilitate teacher job satisfaction, such as effective school management (Evans, 1998a, and 1999). The role of school management was found to be especially vital in new teachers' satisfaction with their job. (Weiss, 1999) The level of job responsibility was also found to affect teachers' sense of satisfaction, (Bishay, 1996) as was a teachers' sense of efficacy. (Somech and Drach-Zahavy, 2000) Many demographic factors such as age (Hickson and Oshagbemi, 1999 and Yezzi and Lester, 2000), gender (Abu Saad and Isralowitz 2001), teaching experience and career stages (Bishay, 1996 and Mwamwenda, 1998), marital status (Mwamwenda, 1997), and pay and other material benefits (Gomez-Mejia, 1984 and Mwamwenda, 2000) have been examined in order to find which promoted job satisfaction.
2. Direct sources of teacher job satisfaction, such as having efforts recognised (Chapman, 1983; Webb, 1985; Farrugia, 1986 and Evans, 1998) and collegiate support and interaction. (Johnson, 1986; Nias et al, 1989 and Yee, 1990) In general, it was found that the majority of teachers give greater importance to "intrinsic" rewards in teaching or "the psychic, intangible benefits from making a difference in the classroom" than on "extrinsic" rewards such as material benefits. (Yee, 1990 and Farrugia, 1986)

Broadly speaking, research has revealed the crucial role played by the following factors in the establishment of job satisfaction for teachers:

- social relationships within the school (colleagues and pupils);
- immediate school management;
- role of recognition from superiors and colleagues;

- relationship between teachers' sense of efficacy and their professionalism;
- a secondary role played by material rewards (affected by teachers' professionalism and level of commitment);
- although demographic factors such as gender, age and teaching experience have no direct impact on a teacher's satisfaction, some studies found that females, older employees and teachers with shorter experience displayed more satisfaction with their job than others. However, research was not conclusive.

2.4.3.1. Career Choice and Job Responsibilities

Career choice in any sector is rarely a straightforward process; in a vocational career such as teaching, there are extra complicating factors: teachers may not choose careers only for financial rewards or social status, but because of a sense of general enthusiasm or commitment to the overall concept of pedagogy – or because of a mixture of reasons which may interact with and sometimes contradict or constrain each other.

Maltese teachers are portrayed as a frustrated group because of their claimed preoccupation with material and social gains which undermine commitment. Farrugia (1986) tests these assumptions in a study to identify factors that influence the choice of teaching as a career, and to distinguish factors that sustain or diminish occupational commitment. The study is based on data derived from a 1982 national investigation among a sample of 186 teachers (5% of the teacher population) who participated in a comprehensive survey of their occupational perceptions. The findings indicate that Maltese choose teaching for intrinsic as well as extrinsic reasons. Among intrinsic attractions are:

1. Desire to work with young people
2. Stimulating and satisfying vocation
3. Love of passing on knowledge, skills.

Extrinsic attractions include:

1. Best job available at the time
2. Job security
3. Good working conditions

4. Parental pressure
5. Family tradition

The study further identifies a link between teachers' primary attraction to teaching and their satisfaction with the job. Teachers who claim to have been attracted to teaching by its intrinsic pedagogical features are found to be satisfied teachers who could reaffirm their choice of teaching. This coincides with my own data (see chapter 7). Ferrugia also finds that what causes teachers to regret career choice is a "perceived lack of intellectual stimulation, the feeling of unremitting and unrewarding work, and lack of appreciation by parents and lack of recognition by authorities...." (ibid: 225) Farrugia concludes that his data indicates the majority of teachers, whether highly committed or otherwise, find satisfaction from intrinsic aspects of their job, and experience frustration from both intrinsic and extrinsic aspects. This supports research that shows intrinsic rewards in teaching are more valued by teachers than extrinsic ones.

Career choice and job responsibilities are linked closely, because the intrinsic factors mentioned have a great deal to do with levels of job responsibility. Bishay (1996) examines the relationship between job satisfaction and motivation and variables such as responsibility levels, gender, subject, age, years of teaching experience and activity, using the Experience Sampling Method (ESM). This involves beeping 12 teachers by special pagers 5 times a day for 5 days. Teachers were asked to complete surveys on mood and activity and completed a questionnaire consisting of 50 items to identify characteristics or activities which might affect their opinions.

The study finds one factor with a significant impact on job satisfaction is job responsibilities. Teachers with higher levels of responsibility had significantly higher levels of job satisfaction. Bishay explained this using "the concept of flow". He argues that increased responsibility levels may lead to satisfaction because of the greater involvement, challenge and control they provide.

Bishay's study also confirms many the findings of previous research into teacher job satisfaction. The technique used is interesting; however, conducting the experiment once over only five days could mean that some teachers were caught at a period when

they had specific difficulties or were in a mood unrelated to pedagogic factors. It would have been better if this experiment were repeated more than once to account for non-teaching factors. Teachers who participated in the study were self-selected, which could have implications for the data generated.

2.4.3.2. “Professionalism” and Commitment

“Professionalism” is a key factor influencing levels of job satisfaction, morale and motivation amongst teachers (Evans, 1999). Evans distinguishes between “professionalism” and professionalism: “professionalism”, she claims, is related to ways of thinking that underpin behaviour, unlike professionalism, which mainly relates to explicit ways, or codes of behaviour. She defines “professionalism” as “an ideologically-, attitudinally-, intellectually- and epistemologically-based stance, on the part of an individual, in relation to the practice of the profession to which s/he belongs, and which influences her/his professional practice.” (ibid: 39) The terms work as discrete and mutually illuminating concepts if “professionalism” is the deeper, ideologically complex aspect of professionalism, which can be read simply as being about good or bad practice. In this sense, professionalism would be a natural product of “professionalism”. Hoyle (1975, cited by Evans, 1999) suggests “professionalism” extends along a continuum characterised by two extremes. Teachers fall between two extremes of the “professionalism” continuum.

1. “Extended-professionals” look at wider issues in education and policy, and can achieve dissatisfaction more easily because there may be a mismatch between ideals and reality. Hoyle (1975, cited in Evans, 1999: 39) describes an extended professional as someone who “carries a much wider vision of what education involves, values the theory underpinning pedagogy and generally adopts a much more reasoned and analytical approach to the job.”
2. “Restricted-professionals” are more concerned with what goes on in their classroom: they don’t bother with wider issues in the school. Because of this they can achieve satisfaction more than extended professionals. Hoyle (ibid: 39) describes them as “essentially reliant upon experience and intuition and guided by a

narrow, classroom-based perspective, which values that which is related to the day-to-day practicalities of teaching.”

“Professionalism” may suggest a sense of achievement is not necessarily linked to a teacher establishing a comprehensive philosophy – an abstract model of their work. It may be that smaller visions, limited to solving problems that are immediately apparent without reference to wider concepts, work equally well in certain circumstances. “Restricted professionals” could be more pragmatic and thus effective than their “extended” colleagues, who may be vulnerable to crises linked to their less pragmatic, more conceptual approach to pedagogy. However, this distinction should not be confused with degrees of professional involvement.

Yee (1990) argues that teachers can be grouped roughly as having either high or low professional involvement. High professional involvement, roughly equated with “professionalism”, should be displayed by extended professionals; professionalism more often by “restricted professionals”. Yee develops the concept of high involvement by defining its characteristic expression.

1. A personal perception of efficacy or success rather than a perception of limited efficacy or success;
2. A view of students as the major source of intrinsic rewards rather than a view of students as major impediments to effectiveness;
3. Above average rather than below average time and effort expended;
4. A sense of professional growth not a sense of routine, boredom and lack of professional stimulation.

Only (4) seems more representative of “extended professionalism”. Although Yee does not clarify which group teachers fall into, or, like Evans, whether they differ only in the degree they are closer to either extended or restricted classifications, she states that professional involvement and career commitment are not static conditions but are affected by the work context. Her distinction of high involvement and low involvement teachers is not that different from Evans’s distinction between extended and restricted professionals. The essence of both categorisations is, at one level, the degree of personal

involvement or commitment to one's job. Evans may however describe a greater, more telling complexity: Yee's low/high dichotomy is simplistic. Both Evans (1999) and Yee (1990) conclude that teachers' attitudes to their jobs and their levels of engagement are key factors in determining job satisfaction. Teachers closer to "extended professionals" and those who have a high level of personal involvement in their job tend to find satisfaction through "intrinsic" rewards such as pupils' progress; teachers who are closer to the "restricted professional" extreme, or those with less involvement, might find more satisfaction with "extrinsic rewards".

Teachers differ in the extent to which they prioritise work and devote time and effort to it. Lortie (1975: 89) refers to "commitment" as a "readiness to allocate scarce personal resources" to work. To Nias this describes "an individual's personal response to the perceived demands of teaching rather than his identification with an occupation or its career structure". (1981a: 181) Nias noticed her subjects used the word "commitment" while reflecting on their careers as well as to help describe other teachers' professional attitudes. Commitment was used by primary school teachers "as the quality which separates the 'caring' or 'dedicated' from those 'who are not concerned about the children', or who 'put their own comfort first'. It is also the characteristic which divides those 'who take the job seriously' from those who 'don't care how low their standards sink'." (ibid: 189) This involvement or commitment has implications for teachers' job satisfaction. Though sources of satisfaction also have implications for performance as the "salience of intrinsic rewards is associated with high professional involvement and contributions; alternatively, salience of extrinsic rewards accompanies minimal levels of professional engagement." (Yee, 1990: 119)

Initial motives behind entering the profession have been variables to predict subsequent teacher commitment (see 2.4.3.1). (Farrugia, 1986; Yee, 1990 and Yong, 1995) The dominance of extrinsic motives can have negative implications on commitment and satisfaction. Choosing teaching for extrinsic reasons might ultimately "undermine [teachers'] long term commitment to teaching if they have no genuine interest in this profession." (Yong, 1995: 279) This supports my own findings considerably. Choosing teaching for intrinsic reasons may help sustain interest and commitment. This is important, especially in contexts where teaching is a career with attractive material

benefits. These rewards could become the key reason for application. The danger is when this is the only incentive – then “professionalism”, professionalism and commitment suffer since all positive and negative factors are conflated into the single consideration of material reward. Yee divides teachers into two broad groups according to their initial career attitudes and their reasons to join teaching:

1. “Good-fit” teachers: those who enter teaching because of a positive attraction to teaching such as a desire to work with young people, a commitment to service, an interest in teaching a particular subject or inspiration from former teachers. Such teachers may have felt their vocation for a time and intend to stay in the profession.
2. “Weak-fit” teachers: those who enter the profession because of a more casual attraction. They often become teachers by accident or because no other jobs present themselves. They approach teaching passively, often saying that “...they had fallen into teaching or had chosen it by default”. (ibid: 9). Many weak-fit teachers view teaching as a temporary job, but stay on until retirement.

Although Yee’s division is based on common sense, she fails to account for teachers who entered the profession for a combination of both intrinsic and extrinsic attractions. People, in most cases, base their choice of career on different factors and naturally extrinsic motivations are something to be considered. Also commitment to one’s job is not a static condition: it is affected by factors such as the workplace conditions. A “good-fit” teacher may work in a school where teachers’ work is not rewarded and where the majority of teachers are happy to do only the basics. Such an atmosphere might affect this teacher and force her to review priorities. The opposite could happen with a ‘weak-fit’ teacher working in a highly committed school environment. Therefore, although initial motivations to teach are important indicators of subsequent commitment, we need to acknowledge that there are other work-related factors that have an influence.

2.4.3.3. School Management, Recognition and Achievement

School management or leadership has been found by most studies to be influential on

teachers' sense of satisfaction with their job. (Evans and Maas, 1969; Yee, 1990; Evans, 1998, 1999 and Bogler, 2002) Immediate school administration is important in creating a suitable context for teachers to practice, share and grow in their pedagogical knowledge. (Nias, 1981b) The importance of the school environment can not be underestimated, even amongst teachers who might fall into the restricted professional category. Heads and heads of departments need to adopt open attitudes to new ideas and be willing to listen to, learn from and discuss issues with teachers. A study by Macmillan (1999) compared the effect of school type/management type on teacher morale. It was found that schools where the atmosphere is open and collegial, teachers tend to have more job satisfaction and higher morale. In schools where the atmosphere is tense and where teachers feel isolated, they tend to have less job satisfaction and lower morale. Evans and Mass express "the need for open communication between staff, students and administrators particularly since the role of immediate relationships establishes itself as an important factor of satisfaction." (Evans and Mass, 1969: 27) The systems head teachers maintain are the most powerful determinants of teachers' satisfaction, and in many cases their professional commitment; the more bureaucratic and hierarchic the system, the more teachers may be forced into defensive and restricted pedagogic categories. "Schools organized around hierarchical, bureaucratic control deprive teachers of meaningful input and consequently are often places where both teachers and students regard education less seriously, resulting in low involvement and effort." (Yee, 1990: 5)

This may be true of virtually all professional organisations, and all professions. Perhaps, the more intellectual and critical the employees, the more likely they will respond negatively to imposed structures. This may be especially so when they are young, have new ideas, and feel the extant systems somehow suffocate pedagogic creativity. Clarity of thought, frustration or creativity often emanate from the bottom up: an effective hierarchy encourages novelty and creativity in order to avoid frustration.

Evans's (1998) study on teacher job satisfaction, although small, is particularly important in terms of an analysis of the relationship of achievement and satisfaction and, in terms of my research, her work is particularly generative. The detail she presents gives an important insight into the complexity of this area, and reflects her own

commitment. She interviewed nineteen English teachers employed in four primary schools. To Evans, “achievement” is a crucial element. Her findings reveal there is “heterogeneity amongst teachers with respect to what they found satisfying and/or satisfactory, but the key distinguishing constituent common to all, was whether or not a sense of personal achievement was associated with the factors.” (ibid: 10-11) The relationship between sense of achievement and levels of satisfaction is clearly and unambiguously established, allowing other research to consider the nuances of this association. Evans also finds that immediate school management played a very influential role in teachers’ satisfaction, morale and motivation, more so than centrally imposed factors from educational authorities. She concludes that school management could play an important role in facilitating teachers’ sense of job fulfilment as well as supporting them in meeting challenges. Related to this, recognition of teachers’ efforts from head teachers is identified as a key motivational feature. It is evident from Evans that what motivates teachers is the recognition of their efforts or their talents, and that they are demotivated, in many cases, by insufficient such recognition. Bureaucratic elements facilitate (and may magnify) a sense of recognition. Evans states that “positive job-related attitudes are likely to occur when teachers and headteachers share a vision of how they want their school to develop.” (ibid: 135) The author suggests school management adopt a teacher-oriented approach. This clearly relates to the very particular socialisation that goes on in a school environment; it may be, that the closer and more dynamic teacher’s relations are with both colleagues and management, the more motivation may be linked to the recognition of pedagogic abilities, and the more de-motivation may be linked to what teachers might see as lack of such recognition. Although Evan’s study is small, it identifies a simple, crucial dynamic factor in pedagogic career development.

Giving support to the idea of a central role for management, Bogler (2002) used (discriminate analysis) to assess whether or not a set of variables discriminates between two groups, and if teachers with high job satisfaction can be clearly distinguished from those with low job satisfaction, and what factors are predictive of satisfaction. Background and demographic information was also collected. Data was collected using a quantitative questionnaire completed by 745 primary and secondary school teachers in Israel. The results confirm the low importance of demographic factors compared to

teachers' personal perceptions of their job (specifically, their sense of achievement) and their principals' leadership styles, other findings correspond closely to previous studies.

2.4.3.4. Collegiality - Social Relationships among Colleagues

Although there is a natural asymmetry between cultures with regard to certain aspects of collegiality (in terms of standard practice and tradition), the transferability of the collegiality concept offers few problems in the context of research. Collegiality, the sense of an inclusive social identity within the school, is a positive factor in teacher satisfaction and development. Yee (1990) believes that the way to develop and retain teachers' sense of worth and competence is through professional socialisation and identification. Collegial interaction is considered important for bonding with the profession as a whole, and is valued by most teachers as professional stimulation. "When social and professional interaction among peers does occur, this kind of interaction is a critical source of professional identification and growth." (ibid: 113) There are many professional, emotional and social benefits from collegiality. Having the opportunity to discuss work with others who share the same experience can provide teachers with fresh ideas and help, and give them emotional and moral support.

Collegiality is believed to enhance teachers' sense of satisfaction with their job. Studies have found that teachers value relationships with colleagues. The role of the school management is important in the provision of "learning opportunities" within an enabling "learning space". (Clement and Vandenberghe, 2000) Hargreaves (1994, cited by Clement et al., ibid.) warns about "contrived collegiality": a collegiality that can foster paternalism and dependence, although contributing to the development of loyalty, commitment and professional relationships. Such a collegiality can foster an unfortunate dynamic: paternalism, as I observed earlier, is a poor substitute for openness; dependence on such paternalism suffocates novelty. But all these very negative points may be disguised by the relationships of teachers to each other and to their institution, which can lock teachers in to a closed, uncreative system. It is essential to balance the provision of opportunities for colleagues to work together and the preservation (and encouragement) of individuality.

In a series of three studies set out initially to follow the development of new teachers in Scotland from probation through to five years experience, Fraser, Draper and Taylor (1998) examine the effects of teaching experience, gender and teaching level on job satisfaction. Both male and female teachers participated. Data was first collected by asking teachers to rate their satisfaction in a type of research called “facet satisfaction”. The focus is on the order of rankings and comparisons between groups of teachers.

The findings of this comparative study are that teachers are generally similar, at different stages of their career, in the selection of aspects giving most and least satisfaction. Main sources of satisfaction are: friendliness of staff, intellectual challenge and autonomy. Sources of dissatisfaction include workload, proportion of time spent on administration and social attitudes to teachers. Fraser et al agree with Nias (1981b) about the impact of social environment on the teacher’s identity and sense of “self”. The authors find it reasonable to suggest that “... perhaps related to the lack of felt outside appreciation, the social relationships amongst colleagues is a highly prized facet of the job for all teachers and they are very much happier about that and about the intellectual challenge of the job and its autonomy than they are about administrative and workload factors.” (ibid: 70) This may be slightly specious, since other studies have found relationships with colleagues to be one of the main sources of teacher satisfaction regardless of the wider social view of teachers. In societies where teachers are highly regarded, social relations within the school especially among colleagues are still valued. One explanation could be that, whatever the external environment, colleagues and other members of staff are the only adults with whom teachers mingle in the school setting; so it is natural to value such relationships. Teaching is a “culture of isolation” in which practitioners use their own professional judgement to make key instructional decisions in the privacy of their classrooms. (Griffin, 1995) The isolation, coupled with the specialist nature of the profession, suggests the best informed and most sympathetic listeners will always be other teachers. Teachers spend most of their time in their classrooms away from the company of their colleagues; therefore, forming ties with the other adults in the school who share similar professional interests, is a reasonable, compensatory activity. Also, schools have strong collegiate identities, within which teachers (who have at best little free time) concentrate their socialising activities. Even regular staff activities (meetings, extra-curricular activities and meals) build a closed

social structure, where it would be natural for teachers to experience the positive (and negative) aspects of socialising other professionals would find outside work. A closed environment means that any positive or negative relationships with colleagues will also be magnified.

2.4.3.5. Gender and Pay

Gender differences are documented by many studies on job satisfaction. Females are found to be generally more satisfied with their jobs than males. This is related in some studies (Hean and Garrett, 2001) to gender roles or to women's domestic responsibilities. Evans and Maas (1969) suggest that gender shows promise as a means of analysing teachers' job satisfaction. They find that there are differences between the sexes in achievement of satisfaction, as there is a tendency, at least in this study, for male teachers to be more strongly associated with factors perceived as dissatisfying. Though both sexes value recognition, female teachers value it slightly more.

Hean and Garrett's (2001) study, part of a larger quantitative study to investigate the influence of science teacher job satisfaction on the achievement and attitudes of secondary school students in Chile, used questionnaires on forty-seven selected teachers. The study finds gender-based differences with regard to sources of satisfaction. Female teachers enjoy the interaction and stimulation of working with young people, as well as the more specific positive characteristics of their pupils; their male counterparts are shown not to be so responsive. The researchers explain this as being part of socially acceptable sources of work satisfaction based on gender roles. They maintain female teachers could be socialised to see their professional role linked to nurturing and caring, whereas males are socialised to see their roles as breadwinners, which gives greater importance to material rewards such as salary. Female teachers, unlike male teachers, are found to get satisfaction from the climate of the school and external rewards such as family holiday time. This is in line with Lortie (1975) who cites time compatibility as one of the major attractions for teaching, especially among females.

Bishay's (1996) results also confirm gender differences: women reported lower overall

levels of satisfaction. Bishay suggests women's domestic responsibilities might have caused them to feel less satisfied at work. However, he maintains this finding, which contradicts most research on this issue, could have been due to the subject (for example, art or science) variable and not gender - there are fewer female science and mathematics teachers in the sample. This group, it is found, have the highest levels of job satisfaction (see 2.4.3.1).

Teachers are also found to be neutral about the role of wages as an important factor of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction, and according to Lortie (1975 and 1984) may hesitate to acknowledge the role of material rewards because of the nature of teaching as a "service" job. There is much research about the effect of pay on job satisfaction (Spinelli and Gray, 1998 and Sloane and Ward, 2001) on a profession known to provide fewer material benefits than comparable professions. In line with similar studies on job satisfaction, pay or extrinsic rewards are not found to be as important in promoting job satisfaction as the intrinsic reward of teaching itself. Yee (1990) observes that, although pay may be a necessary condition for career commitment, it is insufficient to motivate high levels of job engagement. She maintains that "pay acquires salience in the absence of intrinsic forms of compensation", though a lack of intrinsic motivations (see below) would usually be rare in a vocational occupation such as teaching. Farrugia's (1986) study on Maltese teachers supports this: none of the teachers in Farrugia's sample regard salary as a "sole, sufficient inducement to career choice". (ibid: 222)

Hean and Garrett (2001) find that age and experience variables have no significant impact on satisfaction. Regarding dissatisfaction, the study finds, at least in Chile, four specific variables:

1. Salary (reported by more than half the sample);
2. Resources, infrastructure and training;
3. Working with students from less privileged backgrounds; and
4. Excessive workload.

Clearly 2 and 4 (and perhaps 3) would be major hindrances to the creation of a sense of achievement, and cultural factors may be important in creating or sustaining a sense of achievement. This study provides evidence of the role played by cultural factors in job

satisfaction. Teachers in the Chilean context express concern about pay levels and work conditions which, they believe, increase dissatisfaction. However, teachers in Brunei (Yong, 1995) cite neither, because they are highly paid and their work conditions are comfortable: achievements may be clearly identified, communicated and positively assessed by the teacher and her colleagues. All this suggests research findings must be viewed contextually. Achievements may *seem* quantifiable, but are as subjectively appreciated as many other factors in job satisfaction.

2.4.3.6. Teacher Burnout

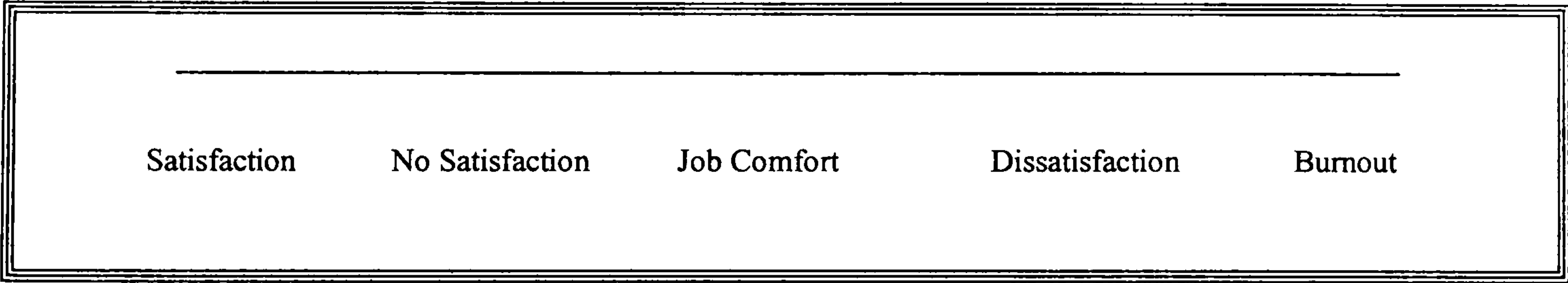
Whereas teachers' feelings of satisfaction can have a positive impact on their performance and on their decision to stay in the field, teacher dissatisfaction can result in negative feelings which could lead to teacher burnout. Research has confirmed that teachers (and other intensive "caring" professions such as nursing) suffer burnout. Burnout is an emotional state with psychological and physical consequences. Leiter and Maslach describe it as "a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment." (1988: 297) Cherniss identifies a shift in attitudes that results in "reduced work goals, less personal responsibility for work outcomes, less idealism, greater emotional detachment ... work alienation and heightened self-interest". (1980, cited by Hughes, 2001: 288). Teachers might experience burnout at any point in their career, though most during the beginning and middle. (Rosenholtz and Simpson, 1990) Those who burn out early are less likely to change careers and are more flexible in their approach to work; those who burn out later might experience serious long-term effects on their careers. (Cherniss, 1992) Remaining may result in negative shifts in attitude, commitment, effort and, ultimately, performance. (Rosenholtz and Simpson, 1990)

Because of these consequences, research is aimed at identifying the precursors to burn out, and thus help design intervention strategies to prevent or minimise the impact. Most research suggests it is the product of personal and organisational factors - though work-related factors receive most attention. High levels of enforced socialisation, responsibility and excessive workload are all named as causal factors. (Cordes and Dougherty, 1993) Some associated it with class management (Brouwers and Tomic,

2000), others with a lack of challenge or skill utilisation. (Cherniss, 1980b, cited by Hughes, 2001) Hughes (2001) uses Jaques’s (1961) theory of equitable payment to draw a model of the burnout process that includes more effective ways of intervention. He believes other researchers fail to recognise the potential that the relationship between job demands and an individual’s ability has in an understanding of burnout; knowing the cause is important - different causes create different behaviour; different scenarios pertain when work demands are too high for a teacher’s abilities - or when the reverse is true. It is vital, therefore, to remove inequalities between work demands and employee’s capabilities. Pines (2002) proposes an existential perspective, suggesting that once the philosophical bases of pedagogy are lost sight of, a sense of pointlessness overwhelms a teacher. “[T]he root cause of burnout lies within people’s need to believe that the things they do are important and significant ... when teachers fail to derive a sense of existential significance from their work, they burn out.” (Pines, 2002: 137)

All these explanations are plausible. However, given that most causes of teacher burnout, which research identified, are essentially similar to factors which foster teacher job satisfaction, this raises the question of whether teacher burnout is the reverse face of the coin of teacher satisfaction? In other words, is teacher burnout the other end of the continuum of teacher job satisfaction?

Figure 2.4: A Continuum from Satisfaction to Burnout



Research evidence points to the critical role leadership or school management plays in burnout. Because of its association with negative organisational outcomes many researchers (Rosenholtz and Simpson, 1990 and Hughes, 2001) have stressed the importance of management being aware of intervention strategies to prevent or minimise the effects of burnout.

2.4.3.7. Teachers' Past Experiences as Pupils

“To ignore our past is, ironically, to remain in corrosive collusion with it.”

(Kearney, 1985 cited by Surgrue, 1996: 158)

The experience of teachers before they teach may be important: some teachers may feel deeply impressed and motivated by their experience as pupils; but there is also evidence that many teachers avoid teaching as they were taught. Past experience, whether positive or negative, can result in a decision to teach. In a study of student teachers, one reason some subjects decided to teach was “... a desire to reform particular aspects of schooling.” (Cole, 1985: 93) This suggests both positive and negative school experiences can have an impact on a decision to join the teaching profession, and therefore early pedagogic events may have complex relationships with later decisions. Memory may be accurate or distorting; a decision may be constructive or reactive; personal ideology may play an interesting part in the way memories of being taught are interpreted vocationally. Lortie’s (1975) idea that only positive school experiences encourage individuals to become teachers is simplistic. Past experiences of any kind form bases for action that are deeply and subtly affected by subsequent experiences and developments, by external social and political developments, and of course by practical contingencies. An interest in teachers’ past experiences creates a view that to study teachers we need to look at them as people with a life history, since “... professional practices are embedded in wider life concerns.” (Goodson, 1992a: 16) This is well and good, but in terms of research not specific and not generative. While Lortie (ibid) refers to school experiences as an “apprenticeship of observation”, that says little: how are we to decide where school experience and other experience interact? How they do so and with what longer-term consequences? Much observation of specific experience as the basis for later developments is thus specious. “Teacher socialization ... occurs through the observation and internalization of particular models of teaching as experienced by the recipient pupil. ... [these models] ... are activated during the training period having often been, so to speak, ‘carried in suspension’ over a period of time, particularly the undergraduate years.” (Lortie 1975 cited in Goodson, 1992a: 13) Too much concerning the nature of memory, “internalization” and especially “carrying in suspension” is unexplained.

Research generally indicates that such previously acquired images of teaching are stable across time and have powerful influences on how novices develop (Johnson, 1994; and Elliott and Calderhead, 1995), but ambiguities remain as to the nature of influence itself, which is outside the remit of this review. As for the effect of such influences on later job satisfaction, the causes are too numerous and idiosyncratic to allow significant, objective evidence to emerge.

Realising the essential role played by teachers' past experiences as pupils, some researchers (Mok, 1994) encourage teacher educators to reveal and address the pedagogic philosophies student teachers bring with them into training programmes. This can help those same student teachers compare what they learn from their training programmes with previous concepts, thus testing the accuracy, appropriateness and relevance of such programmes. "Unless beginning teachers undergo training experiences which offset their individualistic and traditional experiences, the occupation will be staffed by people with little concern with building a shared technical culture. In the absence of such a culture, the diverse histories of teachers will play a cardinal role in their day-to-day activity." (Lortie, 1975: 67) Comparative reflection is certainly one way of challenging deep-seated pedagogic notions. (Schon, 1991) Such reflection has been advocated by many pedagogical researchers and educators (McMahon, 1997; Zeichner, 1995; Valli, 1993; Galloway, 1991; Wallace, 1991, and Bartlett, 1990). An important reason for much pre-service training is to help teachers cope and develop a way to reflect on their pedagogic practice. (McMahon, 1997) Calderhead (1988) lists the advantages of such reflective pedagogy: it enables self-directed professional development; helps link theory and practice and enables teachers to play an active role in their professional accountability.

2.4.4. Teacher Job Satisfaction: Conclusion

Any study of teacher satisfaction must be wary of creating a snapshot that is too easily distorted or distorting: an issue such as this may also be an emotive one, and respondents' perceptions need to be removed, as far as is possible, from any distorting factors. Vocational jobs, like teaching, are clearly not like jobs in other economic sectors; teachers may be more sensitive to the issue of job satisfaction, and this in turn

must create problems in any potential research. Research also needs to recognise the heterogeneity of the profession, especially where it comes to motivations, rather than trying to generate homogeneity.

It is clear from my literature review that the issue of job satisfaction is multi-dimensional. There are many variables and researchers have been concerned with identifying causal relationships to find out what exactly determines “job satisfaction”. Demographic studies have revealed some differences in the way job satisfaction is experienced based on gender, age or length of service. It has been recognised that there is no single factor identifiable as the key. Research suggests it is neither the work nor the employee alone which should be studied for a better understanding, but rather a complex of interrelationships between individual, work and social environments. There are interrelated variables that work together to help or hinder satisfaction: personal factors, immediate work environment, work conditions, social environment and the task.

a) Personal Factors:

- Professionalism orientation
- Professional involvement (commitment)
- Professional capacity
- Self-efficacy
- Factors such as age, career stage (or teaching experience) and gender have secondary importance

b) Immediate Work Environment:

- Supportive school management
- Recognition of teacher efforts by school leadership, colleagues, parents and pupils
- Collegiality
- Positive social relationships within the school
- Pupils’ academic level and performance

c) Work Conditions:

- Workload
- Salary and other material benefits
- Job security
- Non-teaching or administrative tasks
- School building and the socio-economic status it connotes

d) Social Environment:

- Society's view of teaching as a career
- In the case of women teachers, cultural valuation of women's work
- Support facilities for working parents

e) The Task:

- Having a degree of freedom and independence (autonomy)
- Degree of challenge
- Chance for creativity
- Opportunity for professional growth
- Participation in decision-making
- Feelings of empowerment

2.5. Summary of Chapter

This chapter has dealt with the conceptual basis for the present study. The issues of teacher career stages, and teacher job satisfaction are relatively new research perspectives: they reflect a new interest in teachers as a group and individuals. Much of the literature I have reviewed in both sections is very generative in terms of my own data collection and analysis, without offering obscuring conclusions that are unable to be adapted to the very culturally specific origins and context of my research. The models of pedagogic development allow a perspective that suggests a complexity to adult development which has, until recently, been ignored, but which is deeply relevant to any research on teaching – particularly mine which seeks to examine the trajectory from enthusiasm to frustration. In chapter 5 I examine my own respondents' attitudes

and experiences as formed by career stages, or relating to their experience of these stages and the various phases which make them up.

The literature review is split between teacher concerns and career stages, and job satisfaction. The former is the major focus of my thesis, and the models reviewed play a key role in developing a model of teaching in Oman. Both concerns and stages are important, though here I concentrate on stages since these include concerns. It is relatively recent that research has shown how adults experience development, and that teachers, after training, must therefore also continue to develop, with personal lives impinging on careers. Certain concerns I find characterise the key stages of any teaching career, and although such descriptions aim at generalisation, any researcher should be aware of important (and perhaps contradictory) individual differences. Therefore an important feature of effective models is flexibility – rigid, segmented, chronological generalisations are what we need least.

Teacher job satisfaction was not initially germane but nonetheless evolved as an area of interest when data generated from open-ended interviews suggested the subject could be important. Although job satisfaction is essentially a personal feeling, various external as well as internal factors coincide: initial career motives, school management and collegiate relationships all play an important part in determining levels of satisfaction. The concept as a whole sheds a useful light on the successive career stages, and the way these interlock.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.1. Introduction

The chapter balances and assesses the qualitative and quantitative approaches to research, in the context of my Omani data, and considers the benefits of triangulation as a “between method” to avoid bias of any single research approach. This is then coordinated by the story of my research, its origins and trajectory, and the purpose behind my early study. I explain the research tools I used – questionnaires principally – and the nature of the exploratory study I completed, its purposes, the nature of the samples, and the results I achieved. I consider what is meant by teaching skills, what may be the factors in encouraging pedagogical development, and the problems faced by both trainees and full-time teachers. I then turn my attention to the core of my research: its questions, significance, the sample and research instruments used – questionnaires, interviews and diaries – and the way I used these instruments to derive generative data. Finally, I consider the validity and reliability of the data I achieved, and the limitations of such research as this.

My aim has been to evaluate a range of research methodologies, and to choose those which might best suit the unique nature of my subjects and their socio-cultural context. I did not want to establish, from the outset, a research methodology which was set to function along a single ideological path, perhaps by pursuing for example a quasi-scientific approach. Oman is unique, my approach needed to tease out that uniqueness as well as defining it in terms of wider pedagogical enquiry.

3.2. The Quantitative or the Qualitative Research Approach?

Recent years have witnessed a change from emphasis largely on empirical and quantitative scientific studies to the acknowledgement of qualitative research in

education, such as ethnography and life history (Saran, 1985 and Burgess, 1985). Although quantitative methods of research, based largely on questionnaires or surveys, are beneficial, their ability to reach a large number of subjects is offset by a lack of profound insight: focus on quantity of the respondents, and the uniformity sought from their responses might ignore important details. As a result, qualitative research methods were finally recognised as worthy research devices that can and do provide in-depth types of information, which are not possible to derive from purely quantitative methods.

Research methods “[A]ct as ‘filters’ through which the environment is selectively experienced.... Exclusive reliance on one method, therefore, may bias or distort the researcher’s picture of the particular slice of reality she is investigating.” (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000: 102) By employing more than one method, this study seeks to achieve methodological triangulation. King, Keohane and Verba (1994:5 cited by Newman, 2000: 17) state that the “best research often combines the features of both qualitative and quantitative research methods”. Indeed, different methodologies can be used in complementary ways. Best and Kahn (1989: 164) even argue that “[i]t may be unwise to try and draw a hard-and-fast distinction between qualitative and quantitative studies. The difference is not absolute; rather it is one of emphasis.” It is important to explain such complementarity.

“The key features common to all qualitative methods can be seen when they are contrasted with quantitative methods. Most quantitative data techniques are data condensers. They condense data in order to see the big picture...Qualitative methods, by contrast, are best understood as data enhancers. When data are enhanced, it is possible to see key aspects of cases more clearly.” (Ragin, 1994: 92, cited by Newman, 2000: 17)

A multi-method approach can be used to cross-validate data from the different research instruments and can strengthen validity. (Karavas, 1993 and Patton, 1999)

The topic of the research is a key determinant of the research methodology and the tools employed. Trow (1957, cited by Burgess, 1985) states that “[i]t’s not the superiority of one method over another, but the appropriateness of a method of investigation for a

particular research problem.” From this perspective, the present study employs both methodologies to benefit from the advantages of each and compensate for any drawbacks each inevitably contains.

Qualitative research “makes little use of numbers and statistics, but instead relies on verbal data and subjective analysis”. (Gall, Gall and Borg, 1999:13 cited by Newman, 2000) Also called the “interpretivism approach”, it relies on an interpretive epistemology which believes that “scientific inquiry should focus on the different social realities that individuals in a social situation construct as they participate in it”. (Ibid: 14)

The motive behind my use of a qualitative approach is because such methods emphasize “the importance of understanding the meaning of human behaviour and the social-cultural context of social interaction”. (Patton, 1987: 20) This approach allows the study of selected issues, cases and events in depth and detail, unconstrained by predetermined categories of analysis. Research is “oriented toward exploration, discovery and inductive logic”. (ibid: 15) Researchers who use qualitative methods “stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied and the situational constraints that shape inquiry”. (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 4) Since this study attaches great importance to social context in the interpretation of its results, it is appropriate to make use of qualitative research tools. However, a larger number of teachers would be needed to render the results generalizable to a larger population. Surveys (a quantitative research tool) are used to examine whether personal constructs are shared by other teachers.

3.3. Triangulation

The term triangulation is very common in educational research. Originally, triangulation is a measurement used as a locator or to measure distances between objects. (Cohen et al. 2000 and Newman, 2000). “[T]riangular techniques in the social sciences attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint and, in so doing, by making use of both quantitative and qualitative data.” (Cohen et al., 2000: 112)

There are many types of triangulation (Denzin, 1970 cited by Cohen et al., 2000 and Newman, 2000), but methodological triangulation is perhaps best known. It is, according to Cohen (ibid: 112) "... the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour." Triangulation of research methods may help in overcoming the problem of "method-boundedness" and in establishing the validity of the study. Denzin (1970 cited by Cohen et al., 2000) distinguishes two types: "within methods" - the replication of a study to check reliability and confirm theory; and "between methods" - the use of more than one method to achieve objectives. Other types of triangulation include time triangulation, space triangulation, theoretical triangulation, investigator triangulation and combined levels of triangulation. It is important to know that triangulation does not always produce "... convergence, but instead illustrates inconsistencies or contradictions among findings about the same phenomenon When this happens, it still is possible to validate the conflicting data by reconciling them within an explanatory framework". (Gall, Gall and Borg, 1999: 30 cited by Newman, 2000)

This study uses "between-methods" triangulation to ensure results were not biased by adhering to one research method. The use of more than one method, the qualitative (for interviews) and the quantitative (for questionnaires), is a way of generating different types of data about the same phenomena and from the same population (and allowing data analysis triangulation). Whereas my questionnaires treat respondents as a group, interviews are aimed at probing teachers' experiences to look for variations that might have been overlooked by the nature of the questionnaire as a tool. It is interesting to establish whether respondents' answers to the same questions would differ when using a different research tool: would respondents' answers be consistent regardless of the instrument used? Using more than one research method works to validate the findings further. It is interesting to compare data obtained from the different tools. The combination of two approaches (quantitative and qualitative) also helps investigate the limitations of each with regard to the emerging data.

3.4. The Story of My Research

When I started thinking about research I decided on a topic that would offer practical

benefits for my country. This was partly because of the lack of academic studies in Oman. My first idea was a needs assessment of EFL teachers in the Sultanate. This grew from training as an EFL teacher which exposed, to me, the inadequate pre-service training programme. From my contact with other EFL teachers I found many had the same feelings about their training.

However, after being accepted at Warwick, and through discussions with my supervisors and extensive reading in the field of teacher education and development, I came to change the focus of study. The nature and dynamic qualities of career stages in teaching proved of particular interest, and suggested a practical applicability: unfortunately, there is little in the literature on this area. Many studies are derivative; most focus on the practical training period or the probationary year; few manage to explore the later stages of a teacher's career. Furthermore, most studies were done in and about Western countries that only remotely resemble the Omani cultural and educational paradigms: some might suggest these systems were many steps ahead of the Omani educational system. After a preliminary investigation in Oman to establish the situation of EFL teachers and English language teaching in general (3.5), I decided research on this topic would be useful and could break new ground.

The second essential step was to decide on research tools. Deciding on the methods to be used for data collection is an important part of planning research as this decision influences the "precise form of the hypotheses or questions to be studied and the nature of the sample to be drawn". (Nisbet and Entwistle, 1970: 32). I did not want to rely on a single research method, as different sources of data, I believed, are needed to derive valid conclusions.

3.5. Early Research: Exploring the Field

3.5.1. Purpose: Exploratory Study

The overarching purpose of the preliminary study was to refine the focus of my thesis and enable me to consider the design and development of appropriate research tools for the main study. It also made it possible to locate research subjects and access data on

the numbers of EFL teachers who had graduated from SQU since 1990, and find out where they now taught. It seemed a good opportunity to get volunteers for diary writing. Conducting this early study enabled me to enhance my knowledge of schools in Oman, and to take an initial sounding of the perceptions and concerns of teachers of English and their pupils. It also helped me draw realistic expectations of fieldwork. Going through the actual procedures of designing, piloting, distributing, collecting, coding and analyzing the questionnaires gave me first hand experience of what it is to be in the field.

3.5.2. Sample: Exploratory Study

The sample for the exploratory study consists of three groups all of whom are Omani nationals: 29 female secondary school pupils with varying levels of English language proficiency (their proficiency level was determined on the basis of their English language teachers' judgement), 13 male and female university student teachers in their final term at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), and 45 preparatory and secondary female schoolteachers. The teacher sample was randomly drawn from two regions - Muscat and Aldhahira.

3.5.3. Research Tools: Exploratory Study

Questionnaires were used as the research tools and there were two: one for school pupils and the other for English language teachers. The latter questionnaire was also administered with minor adjustments to student teachers. All questionnaires were in Arabic, and consisted entirely of open-ended questions (see Appendices 1,2 and 3).

The teachers' and trainees' questionnaire aims at establishing perceptions about pedagogy, about what makes a good EFL teacher, about problems and needs and opinions regarding pre-service training. The pupils' questionnaire explores pupil attitudes to English, after eight years of study, and also their views of what constitutes the "good" EFL teacher.

3.5.4. Research Procedure: Exploratory Study

I successfully sought access to schools in two regions from the Ministry of Education and, with information from official lists, was able to select a sample of teachers trained in SQU, with different amounts of teaching experience. Teachers were happy to cooperate by completing questionnaires, but were less enthusiastic about writing diaries.

I visited 8 preparatory and secondary schools in the Muscat area where 34 teachers worked, and obtained an 80% response to my questionnaire, and a promise from half the respondents to attempt keeping a diary. In the Dhahira region, a 3.5-hour drive from the capital, a positive response from 22 teachers gave a 95.5% response to questionnaires and a promise from 91% to attempt a diary.

The pupils' sample was from one secondary school in Muscat. I explained to them briefly, in Arabic, the aim of the questionnaire and went over the items, explaining what was required of them. Although they were asked to write down their names on the questionnaire (in order for me to know which proficiency level they had reached), I assured them that answers would be confidential.

Finally, I met student teachers in their final year during one of their lectures. Their lecturer allowed me 20 minutes to distribute the questionnaire, and 13 trainees voluntarily answered it.

3.5.5. Results and Discussion: Exploratory Study

3.5.5.1. Teachers' Roles

Table 3.1: Teachers' Roles
N=58

Role of Teacher	Frequency	%
An instructor	41	70.6%
A counsellor	35	60.3%
Directing pupils' behaviour (pupil-related disciplinary work)	27	46.5%

These three roles reflect teachers’ paradigmatic construct of pedagogy. A teacher’s role is multi-dimensional. A teacher possesses knowledge and transmits it to her pupils - a traditional view of pedagogy; the role of teacher as facilitator of learning was not mentioned by these teachers. A teacher is also a counsellor - someone pupils turn to in time of need. Pupils can discuss both personal and academic issues with teachers, a nurturing role related to a disciplinary role. A teacher is perceived as having the right to direct students’ behaviour and teach them morals. This role may be a product of Omani social mores, where adults are still expected and encouraged to “correct” “bad” (that is, unacceptable) juvenile behaviour, a role called into doubt in Western pedagogy but still encouraged by political hierarchies. More experienced teachers expressed this role by saying they acted as parents or elder sisters to their students. This expression was not present in the trainees’ and less experienced teachers’ responses, perhaps because of their youth, but is an important dimension of teachers’ work in Oman: a teacher is not just a dispenser of information, but a disseminator of social values and social patterns of behaviour.

3.5.5.2. Personal Qualities and Teaching Skills of ‘Good’ EFL Teachers

Table 3.2: Personal Qualities and Teaching Skills of ‘good’ EFL Teachers
N=58

<i>Personal Quality</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Teaching Skill</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Motivation	29	50%	Use of different activities	30	51.7%
Competency in L2	24	41.4%	Classroom management	17	29.3%
Patience	24	41.4%	The ability to deal with individual differences	17	29.3%

The prime position here of motivation indicates teachers’ interest in pedagogy is a pre-requisite to being a “good” teacher. It was interesting to find that many respondents put competency in L2 under personal qualities whereas others put it under the teaching skills. It was clear the importance EFL teachers placed on competency in L2. Being patient is another common quality of a “good” EFL teacher, according to 41.4% of the

sample. It is needed, said the teachers, because of Omani students' low levels in English, which require added patience.

The use of different activities in teaching was found by more than 50% of the respondents to be one of the most important pedagogic skills, followed by the ability to control the classroom. "The ability to deal with individual differences" was also valued, though by fewer teachers; trainees did not mention it.

3.5.5.3. Problems Faced

The problems experienced by the participants divides the sample into two main groupings.

A. Trainees:

The most frequent problem trainee teachers mention is "the way the pupils react to them by not treating them as teachers and not respecting them". In some cases, other teachers and the school principal also treat trainees as students and not as teachers, which affects confidence. Trainees also mention "lack of freedom given to them in the methods they use to teach their classes" and "not being allowed to practise what they have learned at the university". This finding is similar to another study of EFL student teachers in the Omani context (Ezzaki, 1997).

The second most frequent problem cited is the short period of teaching practice. This, in their opinion, does not provide them with enough opportunities to get to know students or learn how to deal with them. Some mention the problem of the contradiction between supervisors' and cooperating teachers' opinions of pedagogy.

B. Practising Teachers:

The problems these teachers mention fall into three categories.

- School administration: the administrative work needing done aside from teaching, which they feel demanded a lot of time and effort.

- Pupils: the most common problems are de-motivation, slow learning and the different levels of pupils in a single classroom. Teachers with less experience (1-3 years) add misbehaviour.
- The curriculum: both qualified teachers and trainees express dissatisfaction with the curriculum. Problem areas include length, repetitive nature of exercises, and the need to “finish” a book within a period dictated by inspectors, which leaves, they claim, no freedom to introduce new techniques or ideas or bring in extracurricular materials. A problem exclusively mentioned by teachers with seven or more years of experience is the absence of in-service training courses, which they feel could, potentially, be refreshing, motivating and helpful in up-dating their knowledge.

3.5.5.4. Teacher Development Factors, excluding Pre-Service Training

The factors that help trainees’ pedagogic development are their motivation to become teachers, and the encouragement from families and those who had been their teachers. However, all teachers I sampled recognized their own experiences in teaching as the most important factor in professional development – followed by assistance from more experienced colleagues, and the presence of inspectors.

This finding is alarming: it clearly shows that these teachers have few objective means to develop professionally. “Teachers naturally learn over the course of a career. However, learning from experience alone will ultimately limit development” (Day, 1999: 2) and can produce “at best limited growth.” (ibid: 52) Similarly, Smith and Varma (1996: 24) conclude that “practical school-based experience per se, of whatever length, is not necessarily valuable and productive experience, and it does not necessarily enable students to acquire and enhance their professional capabilities.”

This is something clear, both from the literature, and from my exploratory and main research. There are a considerable number of factors which influence teacher development, and their ability to assimilate their school experiences. My exploratory work showed that, in order to gain the maximum amount of information about a

complex and very subjective set of experiences, data gathering would need to be based around interviews, and their qualitative analysis.

3.6. Purpose: Main Study

The study aims to determine whether Omani EFL teachers follow a similar sequence of career phases as those identified in the literature. It also seeks to discover the concerns and professional needs of Omani teachers, in particular females, at different career phases, as well as factors influencing those teachers' progression through these phases. Two important themes are also discussed: the roles of gender and job satisfaction in the teaching profession.

3.7. Research Questions: Main Study

The research attempts to answer the following questions. Although the focus is to investigate the career stages of Omani female EFL teachers, the original research questions were refined according to the data derived. This was inevitable since part of the study uses a qualitative approach, which acknowledges the need to update research goals.

1. Is there a general sequence of stages through which Omani teachers move in their career? If so,

- a) What are these stages?
- b) Are they similar to the stages of teacher development identified in the literature?
- c) What are the characteristic concerns of trainees and teachers at each of the different stages?
- d) What part does professional experience play in progression between stages?

2. What interplay exists between teachers' personal and professional lives?

- a) What attracts Omani women to teaching as a career?
- b) What is the role of gender in the professional lives of teachers?

3. How does pedagogic job satisfaction evolve?

- a) To what extent are Omani women teachers satisfied with their job?
- b) What are the determinants and sources of job satisfaction?

3.8. Population and Sample: Main Study

The research population is all Omani EFL teachers who graduated from SQU between 1990 and 2000: around 500 female and male teachers. It also includes student teachers in their final year of a four-year pre-service programme in SQU in the academic year 2000/2001. My sample is limited to 190 female EFL teachers, at preparatory and secondary levels only. Stratified sampling is employed, based on years of teaching experience. A cross sectional sample is randomly drawn to serve the purpose of determining changes in teachers over time. Longitudinal studies would have proven to be more beneficial in this aspect. However, due to the time limitation of the research this was not possible. The use of a cross sectional sample, as we will see later, is used to validate the data.

The research sample consists of the following:

A) 190 student teachers and teachers with teaching experience ranging from 0 (for trainees) to 10 years. These all responded to the questionnaires of the study. The teachers work at the preparatory (ages 13-15) and secondary (ages 16-18) school levels in three different regions in Oman: Muscat, Dhahirah and Batinah Shamal. The sample was initially divided into five groups based on teaching experience. Later the third and fourth groups were condensed into one as the data showed few differences.

1. Student teachers (in their final year of pre-service training N= 22);
2. Novice (first year of teaching) teachers (N= 18);
3. Teachers at the initial years of their career (1- 3 years of experience N= 67);
4. Teachers at the early years of their career (4- 6 years of experience N= 56); and
5. Teachers at the mid-years in their career (7-11 years of experience N= 27).

Despite attempts it was not possible to have equal numbers of subjects in each of the categories - the first two groups represent graduates of 1999 and 2000 only, and the

number of teachers in the three other groups depended on the total number of graduates from SQU in each academic year. These numbers varied greatly. The number of graduates in the period from 1990-1993 was small; many had taken administrative posts in schools and at the Ministry of Education because they were the first graduates from SQU. I had trouble locating the remaining teachers and convincing them to participate in the interviews.

B) 25 trainees and teachers who were interviewed. Those, too, were initially put into five groups on the basis of their teaching experience (see above). Five interviewees were assigned to each category. Later, because of lack of differentiation, the third and fourth groups were condensed into one.

C) 77 trainees and teachers who agreed to keep a diary. Those too ranged in teaching experience. However, diaries as a potential source of data had to be abandoned because of poor return by respondents. (see 3.9.3.)

3.9. The Research Instruments: Main Study

3.9.1. The Questionnaires

Surveys are the most commonly used research tool especially in quantitative types of research. A survey can be defined as “a method of gathering information from a number of individuals, a ‘sample’, in order to learn something about the larger population from which the sample is drawn”. (Ferber et al, 1980 cited in May, 1993: 65) There are four main types of surveys, according to Ackroyd and Hughes (1983 cited in May, *ibid.*), factual, attitudinal, social psychological and explanatory surveys. Questionnaires are regarded as a “direct” yet “impersonal” method of collecting data. Sometimes they are anonymous to allow respondents greater freedom in providing true or frank answers to somewhat intimate or threatening questions. They may be analysed using simple or complex statistical techniques.

There are many advantages to questionnaires: objectivity, ease of administration, economy in cost, time and labour and ability to reach a large number of people. A potential disadvantage is the important questions are already decided. (*ibid*: 86) Another weakness is that a proportion of the sample will not answer, and it is difficult to predict

how their replies may differ from those who do reply. (Nisbet and Entwistle, 1970)

The questionnaire in this study is exploratory, aiming to find out what encouraged women in Oman to become teachers, what or who influenced their decision, their current concerns, difficulties and professional needs and level of professional contentment. There are two questionnaires - or more precisely two versions of the one questionnaire: one for trainees and one for experienced teachers. The reason is that not all components apply to both types of respondent, because of differences in status: student or experienced teacher. The questionnaire is not in fact a self-contained instrument, but leads up to the interviews, and the data generated helps delineate the main themes to be examined in follow up interviews.

3.9.1.1. The Questionnaire Design

The design of the questionnaire and its components is based on educational and social research (Cohen et al., 2000; Patton, 1999, 1987; Holliday, 1994 and Burgess, 1985); previous relevant studies (Huberman, 1992, 1993, 1995; Christensen and Fessler, 1992; Sikes, 1985; Fuller, 1969 and Day, 1999) and on the preliminary study I did in Oman (see 3.5) I took care that the items were referenced against the objectives of the study, and that the wording of questions did not “lead” respondents. Since the questionnaire is in English, I made sure questions and instructions were comprehensible.

The questions are in themed groups and organised chronologically, the different parts focusing on the main periods in the respondents’ training and careers. It contains multiple-choice questions, open-ended questions and questions on a Likert-type scale. I tried to include all possible alternatives in the multiple-choice - piloting the questionnaire was very helpful with this. The questionnaire was drafted and redrafted many times. It was tried first on some postgraduate Omani and non-Omani EFL teachers at Warwick University. It had been also evaluated by my supervisors and academics at SQU before and after I piloted it.

The questionnaire is in three main parts. The first aims at gathering background information about the respondents. It includes questions about age, marital status,

number of children and ages and, where appropriate, length of teaching experience. The second part looks at the respondents' initial career motivations - when and why they became teachers. It also includes questions about initial teaching experience: first year (for teachers) or teaching practice (for trainees). This part contains multiple-choice as well as open-ended questions. The third part is the longest and looks at respondents' current situations, including items about their pedagogic comfort or discomfort, their perceptions of teaching, whether they consider leaving and why, the main reasons they remain, and difficulties they face. This part uses a combination of multiple-choice, open-ended, and Likert-type questions. Respondents are given a chance to add their own comments at the end of the questionnaire and are invited to participate further by agreeing to be interviewed - those interested provided contact numbers. (See appendices 7 & 8)

3.9.1.2. The Process of Data Collection through Questionnaires

I returned to Oman for data collection in mid October 2000. There I had first to gain permission to conduct the study in government schools and at SQU. This was not easy: it took a working week to gain consent, after which I piloted the teachers' questionnaire on 10 Omani EFL teachers with varying levels of experience. The teachers were asked to reply to the questionnaire items and critically to evaluate the questions, indicating difficulties they faced understanding or replying to any question. They were also asked to evaluate question clarity, and indicate whether additional options were needed in the multiple-choice section. In short, they were requested critically to examine each aspect of the questionnaire, including sequence and layout. On the basis of oral and written feedback some items were modified. This was done from 28/10/00 to 12/11/00. A similar procedure was followed in piloting the trainees' version of the questionnaire. Seven EFL student teachers in their seventh term of a four-year BEd programme were asked to reply to the questionnaire and indicate any difficulties encountered in doing so. Their suggestions were taken into account.

I had decided to distribute the questionnaire in three Omani regions to get a representative sample. The distribution and collection of the questionnaires in Muscat region took place from 13/11/00 to 29/11/00. I visited 17 schools and successfully

distributed and collected 73 questionnaires. This process involved considerable effort - I travelled distances of between 20 and 60 km for each separate school, and in many cases did not know, and was not supplied with the exact location. Oman is not Europe: even finding government-funded institutions can be arduous. When I did arrive at these schools I had to convince teachers to respond seriously to the questionnaire and return it to me. I know it was a long questionnaire and I am thankful to all who responded. Sometimes I had to return to the same school twice or even three times to collect the questionnaires, and occasionally met teachers who volunteered to bring back the questionnaires to me – these I met many times, arranging to meet wherever they thought convenient: supermarkets, their homes, my home or even beside the motorway. This effort guaranteed a high return percentage (99 %).

The second and third stages in the distribution and collection of questionnaires were in two other regions: Albatinah Shamal (two hours by road from Muscat), and Aldhahirah, (three and a half hours from Muscat) (see figure 1.1). I was hoping to cover more than those two regions, and permission to distribute the questionnaires in a third region, Albatinah Janoub, was obtained. However, the inconvenience and difficulty of getting to teachers in these regions were too great: the research would have required me to spend at least two weeks in each region, and my gender would have hampered my mobility.

I travelled to Albatinah Shamal and Aldhahirah and made every possible effort to meet the teachers face to face and hand them the questionnaires myself, go over the questions with them and answer any queries they might have had. This was a successful exercise since I had managed to convince the local educational authorities to gather each day some teachers in one of the directorates' seminar rooms. At the meetings, I welcomed the teachers and thanked them for participating; I distributed the questionnaires and went over the questions, allowing time for any queries before asking them to start answering. Most teachers answered the questionnaire during the meeting and handed it back to me before leaving; others asked to return it later – these I duly collected. Each meeting lasted on average 2.5 hours. The return rate was 100% of distributed questionnaires in both regions – a percentage only possible with the assistance of the local educational authorities. The total number of teachers who answered the

questionnaires in the three regions was 168 – this accounts for (38.8%) of total female EFL graduates from SQU between 1990-2000.

The last stage of the questionnaire distribution and collection was done at SQU, where a modified version of the teachers' questionnaire was given to trainees in the last year of a four-year BEd programme. These were in their 8th term and had teaching practice at schools twice a week. I distributed the questionnaires through their lecturers. Their return rate was not as high as with the teachers, but it was good (60%). After all the questionnaires were collected, analysis followed. First, the responses were coded and the data entered into an SPSS program to run some statistical operations. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, cross-tabulation and tests of association between factors in Chi-square and contingency tables (see chapter 4) were used.

3.9.2. The Interviews

Interviewing is one of the preferred techniques for data collection in qualitative research. An interview is “a conversation ... where one person – the interviewer – is seeking responses for a particular purpose from the other person: the interviewee.” (Gillham, 2000: 1) It is regarded as a cyclic and interactive process, involving talking and listening. (Powney and Watts, 1987) Ackroyd and Hughes (1983, cited by May, 1993: 91) more specifically define research interviews as “encounters between a researcher and a respondent in which the latter is asked a series of questions relevant to the subject of the research. The respondent's answers constitute the raw data analysed at a later point in time by the researcher”. Interviewing is an art and a science; it requires “skill, sensitivity, concentration, interpersonal understanding, insight, mental activity, and discipline”. (Patton, 1987) Clearly, then, an interview is not just a conversation, but its processes and techniques include all those used in conversation: it is a specialized form of communication, designed for the specific and generative purposes of research.

There are different types of interviews based on the extent to which questions are structured, and how much the interviewee is given the freedom to “lead”. (Gillham, 2000 and Fielding, 1993) Interview types range on a continuum from very structured to semi-structured to unstructured, and may also be characterised by a

quantitative/qualitative dimension. (May, 1993 and Measor, 1985)

Unlike other data collection methods, the success of the interview is highly dependent on the interviewer: the interviewer is the prime research instrument, (Merriam, 1988) and because of this is crucial to the validity of the data achieved. Interviewer effects are major considerations, and potential weaknesses of interviews: interviewers bring a great deal of cultural and ideological baggage to the process, and the assumptions of interviewees about the cultural identities of researchers play a major part in shaping the interview. This may result in interviewees withholding or disclosing certain types of data (Parker and Song, 1999). That interviewing is a direct verbal exchange is the major source of both its strengths and weaknesses. (Borg, 1981) Obvious strengths include flexibility and adaptability, with instantaneous feedback and the opportunity to follow up questions for more data or greater clarity. (Borg, 1981; Best and Kahn, 1989 and Bell, 1993) Interviews are also excellent tools for collecting data about people's personal experiences, feelings, opinions and knowledge. (Patton, 1987) Weaknesses include the fact that they are time-consuming and difficult to arrange; less convenient for the sample and may be more expensive than other research tools. (Nisbet and Entwistle, 1970; Kvale, 1996 and Newell, 1993) Moreover, there is a risk of interviewer bias or subjectivity. (Newell, 1993 and Borg, 1981)

There are three main ways of documenting interviews: the use of a tape-recorder to tape the interview, taking notes during the course of the interview and taking mental notes during the interview and writing them down immediately afterwards. Each has drawbacks, but the least useful (at least for me) may be the last, because of the limitations of human memory. Taking notes during an interview may distract interviewer and interviewee, while using a tape (or other) recorder may raise the anxiety of the interviewee. Nevertheless, it is the best way to document an interview in its entirety. It is possible that familiarity with electronic media and their processes of information gathering (including standard interviews for radio and television) may make interviewees less rather than more apprehensive, but also may *change* the nature of responses. No data collection technique can ever be perfect.

Interviews are used in my research to probe further issues related to teachers' pedagogic experience. The questionnaire data was useful in giving a focus to, and determining the major themes to be followed up in the interviews. Although a questionnaire touches on similar areas, interviews are a richer source of information. Subjects talked about issues they considered important, and offered their interpretation of their world. Subjective perspectives need to be appreciated for a deeper and more complete understanding. The questionnaire is thus a foundation for richer and more extensive gathering of information: "the interview can yield rich material and can often put flesh on the bones of the questionnaire responses." (Bell, 1993: 91)

3.9.2.1. Preparing for the Interviews

I constructed a guide (see Appendix 5) to include the main areas and themes the interview should cover. The main use of this guide is to help make interviewing different people more systematic and focused. It helps ensure that similar information is obtained from the interviewees by covering the same material: it works as a checklist of topics to be covered. (Patton, 1987)

The interviews were carried out in Arabic and covered similar main areas to the ones examined by the questionnaire: the interviewee's entry into teaching, pre-service training, first year in teaching and current status. The interviews were semi-structured: I identified the broad areas to be covered and some key questions, but allowed conversations to develop according to respondents' wishes. Each interview is thus part of the analysis (further developed in the transcription and coding) and helped identify areas to be covered in future interviews. The interview guide was initially checked by my supervisors who contributed valuable comments.

Although a stratified sample based on teaching experience was chosen, teachers with long service talked retrospectively about their entry into teaching, pre-service training and first teaching year, before commenting on their current situations. It is interesting to observe that many aspects of past experiences mentioned by older teachers are similar to the experiences of younger subjects at those specific stages.

Pilot interviews with two non-Omani EFL teachers doing their masters at Warwick, and two Omani EFL teachers in Oman, were conducted. These first attempts at interviewing were helpful in giving me experience. They helped in determining the amount of time needed for each interview, as well as how to adjust the interview guide where needed. According to Powney and Watts (1987: 127) a pilot or trial interview serves three functions:

1. To check that the organisation of the interview meets the requirements of the study;
2. As a practical test of the logistics of the interview; and
3. As an opportunity to practise the interactive skills needed for the type of interview chosen.

The number of pilot interviews was kept to a minimum because I did not want to lose potential interviewees who could contribute valuable data to the study.

It was important to decide how many people should be interviewed, but the nature of the open-ended, semi-structured interviews conducted by a single person, together with the small numbers of teacher volunteers, meant that interviewee numbers had to be small. It was decided that there would be five teachers in each of the five categories I had based on teaching experience. Later these five categories were condensed into four, making category three the largest, with ten interviewees. I gave myself the freedom to increase the size of my sample if I felt the need. My intention was to continue to interview until I reached “theoretical saturation” (Glaser and Strauss, 1968) – that is until I felt I was not gaining any additional data which might modify the properties of my main codes. I shall give details of this process in my description of the process of coding and analysis. Although the number of interviewees might be considered small, I believe size is balanced by depth of questioning, a rigorous and very self-aware coding procedure, and most importantly by the richness of the data derived.

The teachers were contacted through telephone numbers left when they answered the questionnaires (see 3.9.1.1.). Interviewees were selected using two main criteria: first, my ability to reach them, and the length of their teaching experience. When the teachers were contacted, an appointment was made – for their comfort and convenience, choice

of time and place were left to interviewees.

3.9.2.2. Key Considerations

I was concerned about certain issues surrounding the interviews.

1. The position of the researcher: the effect on methods used and data analysis of my being an “insider”. My knowledge and experience could have influenced the formation of the questionnaire and the interviews: for example, the second research question (see 3.7) was guided by specific insider knowledge. During the interviews I was aware that my knowledge of the cultural and educational context within which my interviewees live and work, might influence my choice of questions, the way I asked those questions and my interpretations of the subsequent information. I made a tremendous effort to be conscious of this during the interviews, and the coding and analysis stages.
2. The researcher/researched relationship: the effect I had as interviewer on my interviewees, and how this might influence conversations and ultimately shape the data, was another concern. I was also worried about “leading” subjects into responding just to please me. Sharing things with interviewees could be beneficial in putting them at ease, but equally might create a sense of what I wanted to hear. Being aware of this helped me balance my desire to put my subjects at ease, while not making them feel obliged to say things to please me. I stressed from the outset that there were no right or wrong answers and that I was examining different but equally valid experiences. I feel that, on the whole, I achieved effective balance. Respondents were open, and talked about issues from their points-of-view. I never felt any were “faking”: the honesty with which the sample talked is an important criterion for the validity of my data.
3. Ethical issues: I was aware of the need for subject confidentiality. Therefore, interviewees were given different names in the thesis. If, during an interview, personal information came up, I assured interviewees that whatever they said would remain confidential – especially because I continue to live in the same social context as they do. The information, they were assured, would be used for research purposes

only. Background information about the interviews can be found in appendix 6.

3.9.2.3. Conducting the Interviews

The actual recording of the interviews lasted 1 to 1.5 hours. Some time was spent getting to know the participants and talking about things in general, before or after the interviews. Many teachers were interviewed at home, mainly after 7 p.m. or at weekends. Others were seen on school premises during working hours.

Most participants expressed a general sense of comfort after the interviews. They said I gave them a chance to talk about issues of importance for them. They were glad somebody cared and was willing to listen. Faten, one of the interviewees, said she was “frankly impressed by the questionnaire and it made me feel that someone cares about us. Now in the interview I brought out all that is inside me because nobody cares about us as teachers.” This follows Dexter’s (1970, cited by Merriam, 1988) statement that interviewees get the opportunity to tell others something, and this is in itself a pleasurable and reinforcing thing. He adds that some enjoy the self-analysis and opportunity to clarify thoughts and experiences. Most are flattered by the interest of a sympathetic listener.

Conducting the interviews was a rewarding experience: I had the chance to meet different people, listen and talk to them. The information I gathered was different in kind from that I gathered from the questionnaires. Most respondents were very open; perhaps this was because they could relate to me, a graduate from the same institution who had gone through similar experiences. I was someone interested in them as individuals, and they talked about their experiences, their eyes lighting up when recounting happy moments, or hopes for the future, and getting upset when expressing frustrations.

3.9.2.4. Transcription and Coding of the Interviews

I immediately transcribed each interview to familiarize myself with the conversations, and gain deeper insights into the meanings of particular comments. Immediate transcription served three main purposes: (1) To finish a tiring task promptly instead of

piling all interviews together. (2) With the interview still fresh in my mind I could add details mentioned during any informal interactions. (3) I could start the analysis while interviewing was still taking place. Another reason for transcribing myself, was to maintain confidentiality.

During the transcription process I examined emerging ideas - “mentally” coding as I went along. Although I would scribble ideas and provisional codes on transcript margins, this activity, on the whole, remained a mental one – helpful in focusing questioning in later interviews. Simultaneous analysis was essential to help me organize forthcoming interviews and to understand what types of data I was deriving. “We should never collect data without substantial analysis going on simultaneously. Letting data accumulate without preliminary analysis along the way is a recipe for unhappiness, if not total disaster.” (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996: 2, cited by Oka and Shaw, 2000: 8) Another advantage of simultaneous transcription/analysis was that it indicated when it was time to stop interviewing. As I have mentioned, I gave myself the freedom to add more interviews if I felt it was needed; when the information I was getting started to be similar to previous interviews, it was time to stop.

Having conducted the interviews in Arabic, it was difficult to transcribe them in English. I had to be careful when translating to make sure original ideas were not mistranslated or misrepresented.

When the transcripts were completed, I coded the data generated. For this purpose, I consulted different methodology and data analysis texts (Cohen et al., 2000; Burgess, 1985; Measor, 1985; Patton, 1987 and 1999, Denzin and Lincoln, 1994 and Gough and Scott, 2000). My coding was largely based on, but not solely defined by the “grounded theory” approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1968). This is a method in which the categories for coding are derived from the data itself, and the emphasis is placed on discovery and elucidation of links between the different categories (Turner, 1994 cited by Gough and Scott, 2000). Grounded theory is also related to contextual knowledge, and is concerned with the discovery of meaning in respondents’ data, and generating theories from that data, while focusing on specific research context.

The coding of data was an interesting yet time-consuming task. I went over the transcripts many times, trying to identify common themes. Because I was looking at similarities and differences between teachers' experiences at various career phases, at one point I examined the transcripts of each group separately looking for common features. I also looked at the retrospective comments in each interview – for example, when a teacher talks about pre-service training. I was careful not to allow my insider knowledge to affect interpretation, though it was hard not to be subjective. What made the coding easier was that, in general, all the interviews roughly followed the same order of questions or themes: the broad areas were in a way pre-constructed. However, themes generated within these had yet to be identified, and were determined on the basis of two criteria: the frequency with which interviewees mentioned them, and the detail interviewees gave to an issue, signalling its importance for them. Themes were also suggested by the weight of the evidence. I did the coding manually, using colour coding and writing notes summarising quotes to show main ideas on the side of the transcripts. Later, I gathered different parts under broad headings and developed a profile for each group based on the data. The literature was helpful during this stage. I also kept a set of unmarked transcripts for later use to allow me to revisit the data without being influenced by previous links or analyses. I hoped this would encourage new or different meanings to emerge.

After the initial, somewhat inchoate process of coding, new and significant themes emerged, which were analysed, sifting data to find relationships between themes. The coding process was not straightforward. It involved going back and forth to the data to decide what belonged where. Categories overlapped at times, making it even harder to code. It was also hard to decide whether the explicit or implicit reference in a quotation was important.

3.9.3. Teachers' Diaries

The use of documents written by the subject (journals, diaries, accounts etc) is one of the instruments of qualitative research. Such personal documents as diaries are “a first-person account of a language learning or teaching experience, documented through regular, candid entries in a personal journal” which may then be “analyzed for recurring

patterns or salient events.” (Bailey, 1990 cited by Nunan, 1992:215) The use of diaries as a potential source for my research lies in their wealth of personal information: diaries are important introspective research sources, offering a slice of the respondent’s reality, produced without pressure, reflecting on whatever the respondent wishes.

Diary-writing guidelines were written for the participants (see appendix 4). These included a definition of diaries and the rationale behind asking teachers to keep them, and suggestions for topics. However, it was stressed that these were only suggestions, that teachers should write what they wanted, with the sole proviso that it be about their lives and careers. The diary writers were identified during the preliminary investigation in March, 2000 (see 3.5) to allow participants - especially trainees and new teachers - time to start writing at the beginning of the next academic year.

Convincing people to keep a diary over one academic year with no tangible benefit was difficult; many teachers have family responsibilities beside their work, and I was adding another onerous task. I was able to get many volunteers partly because I explained the benefit of such a tool for researchers, and the great service to both my research and wider pedagogic knowledge should they take part. The other reason I found so many volunteers was because of the innate courtesy of Omanis, who hate to refuse requests. I knew many would drop out mid-way, and that was why I wanted to get as many volunteers as possible. To obviate this likelihood, at the beginning of the academic year 2000/2001, all participants were called either by me or my sister in Oman and reminded to start the diaries – this was also to check they were still interested. They were then called again at the end of the first academic term. By the end of the year, when it was time to collect the diaries, I was disappointed to find the majority had done nothing, despite initial assurances, and the return rate was very low (19.5%): I decided, regretfully, to drop the use of diaries.

The highest number of returned diaries was from new teachers (46.7%). The interest novices displayed by writing personal accounts might indicate something about their isolation. In such solitary situations there is a natural need to share experiences; keeping a diary, guaranteed to be read by an interested person, is a way of addressing anxieties

and concerns. This may have therapeutic effects and help a teacher reflect on their pedagogy.

Although, in the case of my own research, diaries were not effective data gathering instruments, this does not undermine their beneficial use elsewhere. Rather, it draws attention to certain conditions that a researcher needs to be aware of when attempting to use diaries. First, there needs to be constant contact between the researcher and their subject: keeping a diary over a long period is time-consuming, and subjects tend to neglect entries if there is little contact with the researcher. Even minimal contact was not possible in my case, since I was in the UK and, to make matters worse, volunteers were scattered across Oman. Second, for subjects to be keen on keeping a diary, they need to feel a benefit from doing so. I explained to my subjects that keeping a diary would be part of a useful study that could have indirect impact on them in the form of the recommendations that the Ministry of Education in Oman might adopt. I was unable to be more specific, so perhaps this was not a strong enough incentive for many. Research that successfully used diaries was done when student teachers were asked by university supervisors to keep a journal as part of their course, or to participate in a supervisor's study (for example, Ezzaki, 1997). In both cases, the subjects were keen to do so because of the kind of relationship they have with the researcher i.e. their supervisor. The nature of the relationship between researcher and subjects is a vital factor in the successful use of diaries in research.

3.10. Validity and Reliability of the Study

As with any other study the issues of the validity and reliability are central: both are important in establishing the wider truthfulness and credibility of research findings. (Newman, 2000) Cohen et al. (2000: 105) believe it is impossible to achieve absolute validity and reliability. I have tried to ensure results from both research tools are as valid and reliable as possible. The use of different approaches and instruments (triangulation) to investigate the researched phenomena enhances the validity and reliability of the findings, and this I have done. "A multi-method approach to research has the potential of enriching (as well as cross-validating) your research findings." (Gillham, 2000:84)

In designing the questionnaire, I tried to avoid leading questions and make questions as clear as possible. Piloting the questionnaire was also helpful. Moreover, meeting the subjects and going over questions before they answered them, and being present while they answered (whenever possible) helped in eliminating misunderstandings. Not requiring subjects to put their names unless they were interested in taking part in the interviews encouraged greater honesty. Having my supervisors and academics at SQU check the questionnaire before I distributed it may have helped in ensuring content validity.

The validity and reliability of data generated from the guided interviews was enhanced by the careful selection of questions, avoidance of leading questions, giving the interviewee the freedom to say what they wanted, and by minimising interviewer effects. However, it is difficult to achieve validity and reliability when findings are based on interpretations or inference.

Recently, qualitative researchers have started using different terms for validity and reliability: credibility is used to refer to internal validity, transferability for external validity; dependability for reliability and confirmability for objectivity (Edge and Richards, 1998). Those four phrases better describe the concepts, and help establish the “trustworthiness” of qualitative research (see Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In my research credibility was established through the use of different research tools to gather data from the same participants. My experience and knowledge of the context helped in the analysis and interpretation of the data. By providing rich description of the phenomena under study, “transferability” was more feasible. Although it was a difficult task since I was involved in the research by being, as interviewer, the research tool, I was as objective as possible during the conduct of data collection, and the analysis and interpretation of findings.

I ensured the reliability of the coding of the interviews by two means:

1. I doubled checked my coding by returning to code unmarked transcripts some time after coding, without being influenced by that earlier coding (intra-coder reliability).

2. The categorisation of the themes was double-checked by an Omani doctoral colleague also in the field of teacher education (inter-coder reliability), to ensure consistency of coding categories. I gave her a sample of the transcripts (total 4) and asked her to put some categories for the themes that emerged. Our categorisations for the same transcripts were then compared, and there emerged a general agreement on those categories. In instances where our categorisations differed, we reached an agreement through discussion.

3.11. Limitations of the Study

Although the study focused on the career stages of Omani female teachers and the interplay between family life and work, it would have been interesting to examine the career stages of Omani male teachers. A comparison between female and male teachers would have been an important way to further examine the effect of gender on career stages. However, the number of male EFL teachers is currently small, and hence research would be limited. One reason the number is so small is that EFL teaching is not perceived as suitable for men – the subject has been feminized to a certain extent. All subjects were graduates of the same institution (SQU) and followed the same pre-service training programme - it is possible results are influenced by this; but there would be little or no chance of finding whether the pre-service training programme has any effect by comparing graduates from different institutions, on top of which there are no other institutions currently offering pre-service training to EFL teachers in Oman. It would have also been interesting to compare teachers from different specialisations, age groups or teaching levels to see whether these variables have any impact on teachers' career stages.

From a methodological perspective, a longitudinal approach to the study of career stages would have been more appropriate as it could show the changes teachers experience as they move on in their careers. Although subjects were open and honest, their responses could be characterized as superficial, and many avoided talking specifically about their own pedagogical practices: too many respondents lapsed into the comfortable expression of personal experiences, without exploring the details of professional practice. Subjective superficiality too easily replaced complex objective

consideration. This could be because respondents never had had the chance before to articulate their experiences, and were keen to get the opportunity to talk. However, this did not create an ideological frame where they could discuss teaching practices from a theoretical angle. Also, respondents were not used to being interviewed. The novelty or the interviewer effect in a socio-political structure where discussion and expression is not usual may have had negative consequence: since I was researching for a doctorate, this could have had an intimidating effect. As I have noted, geographical distance distorted the data collection process, and the attempt at diary writing was not successful because I was not in place to maintain contact with respondents, and monitor their attitudes to recording data – perhaps forestalling any recidivism. Finally, a larger number of respondents would have given deeper insights into an Omani teacher's world.

3.12. Summary of Chapter

This chapter covers the qualitative and quantitative research approaches, and examines some of the problems linked to research and, specifically, data collection and analysis. My main concern is to show how an adoption of a combination of qualitative and quantitative research, and the use of effective triangulation is able to ensure, as far as is possible, the validity and reliability of the research. I review the purpose, tools and procedures of both the exploratory and main sections of my research, while also indicating how my procedures (or indeed any research of this kind) must recognize its limitations, as an integral part of the research process.

Chapter Four: *The Questionnaires: What do they tell us?*

4.1. Introduction

This is a statement based on the results yielded by the quantitative research instrument - the questionnaires. I described in Chapter 3 how I used two versions of the questionnaire: one for teachers, another for trainees. The contents of both were as close as possible in design, since they served a similar purpose. The questionnaires aimed to find out why Omani women enter teaching, and what their perceptions of the interplay between roles as wives and/or mothers and teachers may be. Another objective was to delineate trainees' and teachers' professional concerns, problems and needs at different periods in their careers, and the sources and determinants of teachers' job satisfaction.

This chapter will be devoted to a descriptive statistical analysis of the questionnaires, using frequencies, cross-tabulation and tests of association between factors in chi-square and contingency tables. Results are reported with reference to the respondents as a single group. However, instances where results are different for each group will be reported specifically with reference to that particular group: "trainees" or "first year teachers" for example. It should be understood that since respondents were given the chance to choose more than one answer to many questions, the total number for those responses would be greater than 100%.

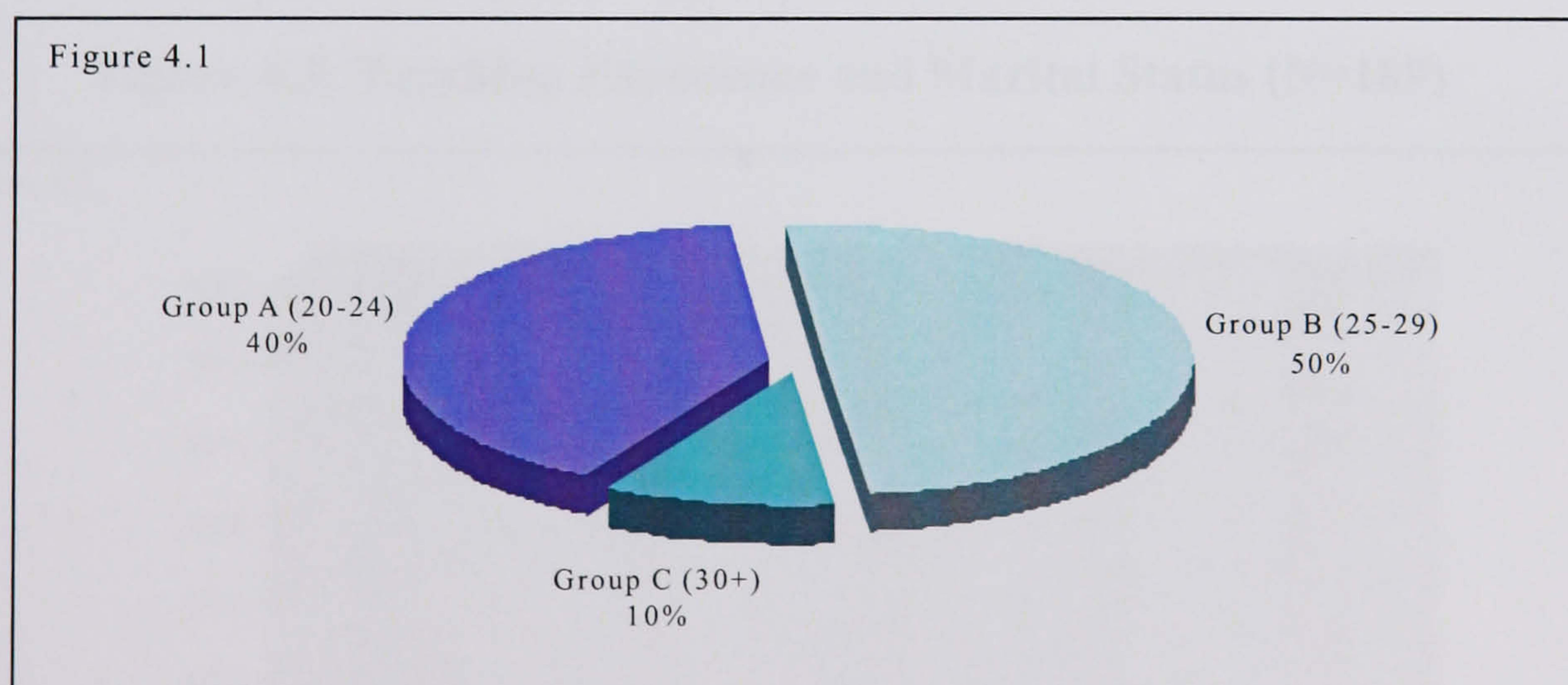
Both questionnaires (see appendices 7 and 8) were divided into three parts: "Background Information", "Entry into Teaching" and "The Current Situation". The questionnaire consisted of multiple-choice items as well as open-ended questions. One of the difficulties I faced in the analysis of results is that the majority of respondents chose not to answer open-ended questions: there were few answers. This made it difficult to characterize the answers of those who did reply. For this reason, answers to the open-ended questions will not be reported.

4.2. The Sample's Profile

The purpose of the first part of the questionnaire is to gain background information about respondents: for example, age, marital status and length of teaching experience. These variables might have implications for the results. While teaching experience is undoubtedly one of the main variables to examine with regard to career progression, consideration of age, marital status and the number and ages of respondents' children helps an understanding of responses, and builds a better picture of the extent of the impact of personal and social backgrounds on career paths. The results provided this profile for the sample:

1. **Age:** The mean age for our sample was 25.4 (SD=3.172) with the minimum 20 and the maximum 38 years. 86.7% were under 30, indicating the youth of teachers in Oman. The age of the majority falls within the most productive years of a woman's life, and this could have implications for their preoccupations and concerns - especially at a personal level. The respondents were divided into three age groups (Figure 4.1). These groups reflect three basic categories of respondent: trainees and novices; early experience and later career. These groupings are suggested by the shifts in marital status as well as shifts in the way respondents see themselves (see 4.4).

Figure 4.1: Sample's Age Groups



2. **Marital Status:** 38.6% of the respondents are single, 61.4% married. The general trend in Oman is for females to marry early. The 38.6% level of those

unmarried in this relatively youthful group may indicate an increase in the average age of marriage in Oman, as has been reported elsewhere (see 1.3.4): the pursuit of higher studies could be one, though not the only factor in this increase. Although only 3 out of the 22 trainees were married, this fraction increases with age and length of service, and it is obvious that age group and teaching experience would be found to be significantly related to marital status ($p < .01$) (Figures 4.2 and 4.3). It is useful to bear in mind the interrelation of those three variables in the interpretation of results. Generally, most Omani women marry after they finish university, early in their careers.

Figure 4.2: Age Group and Marital Status (N=184)

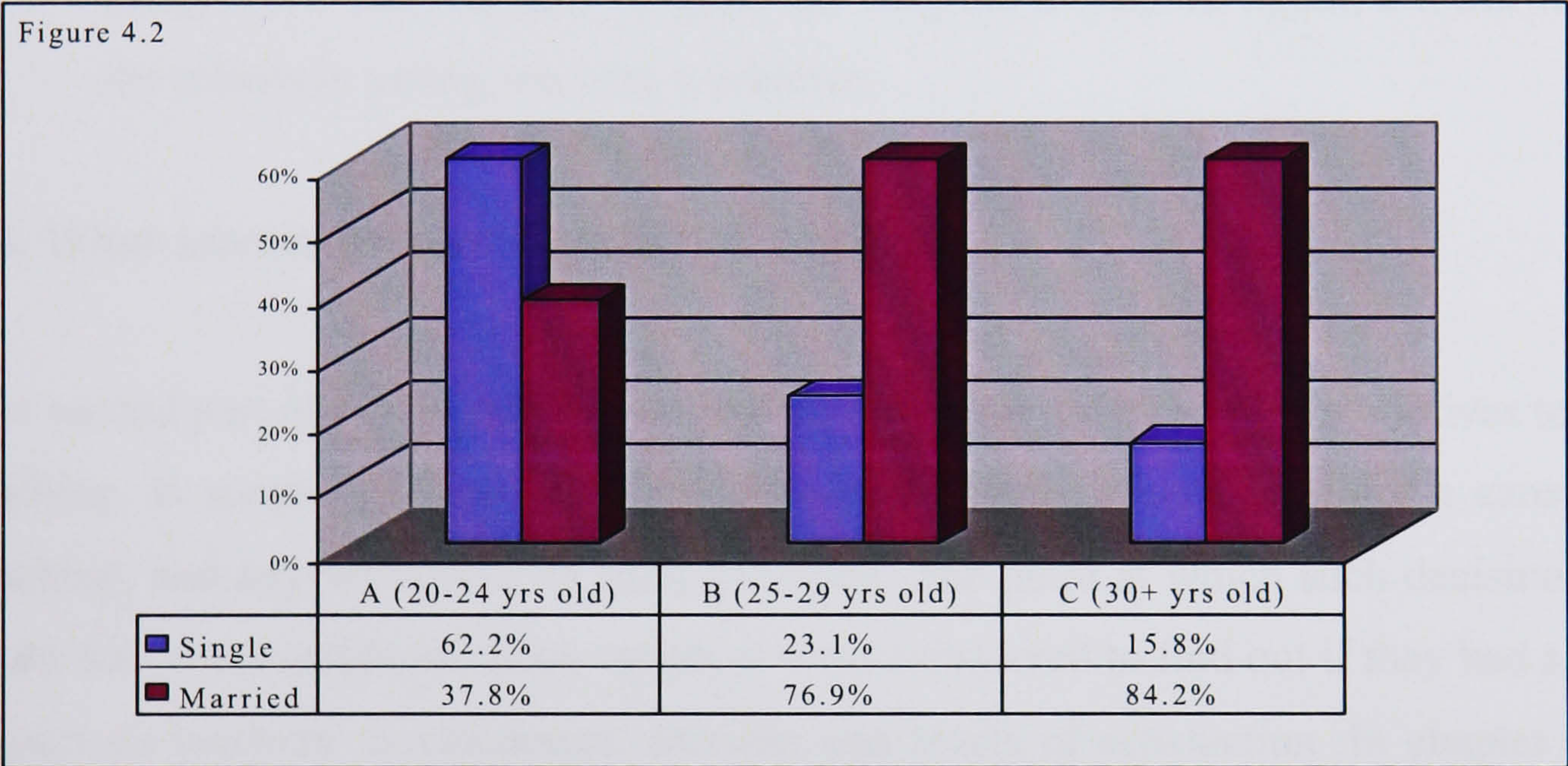
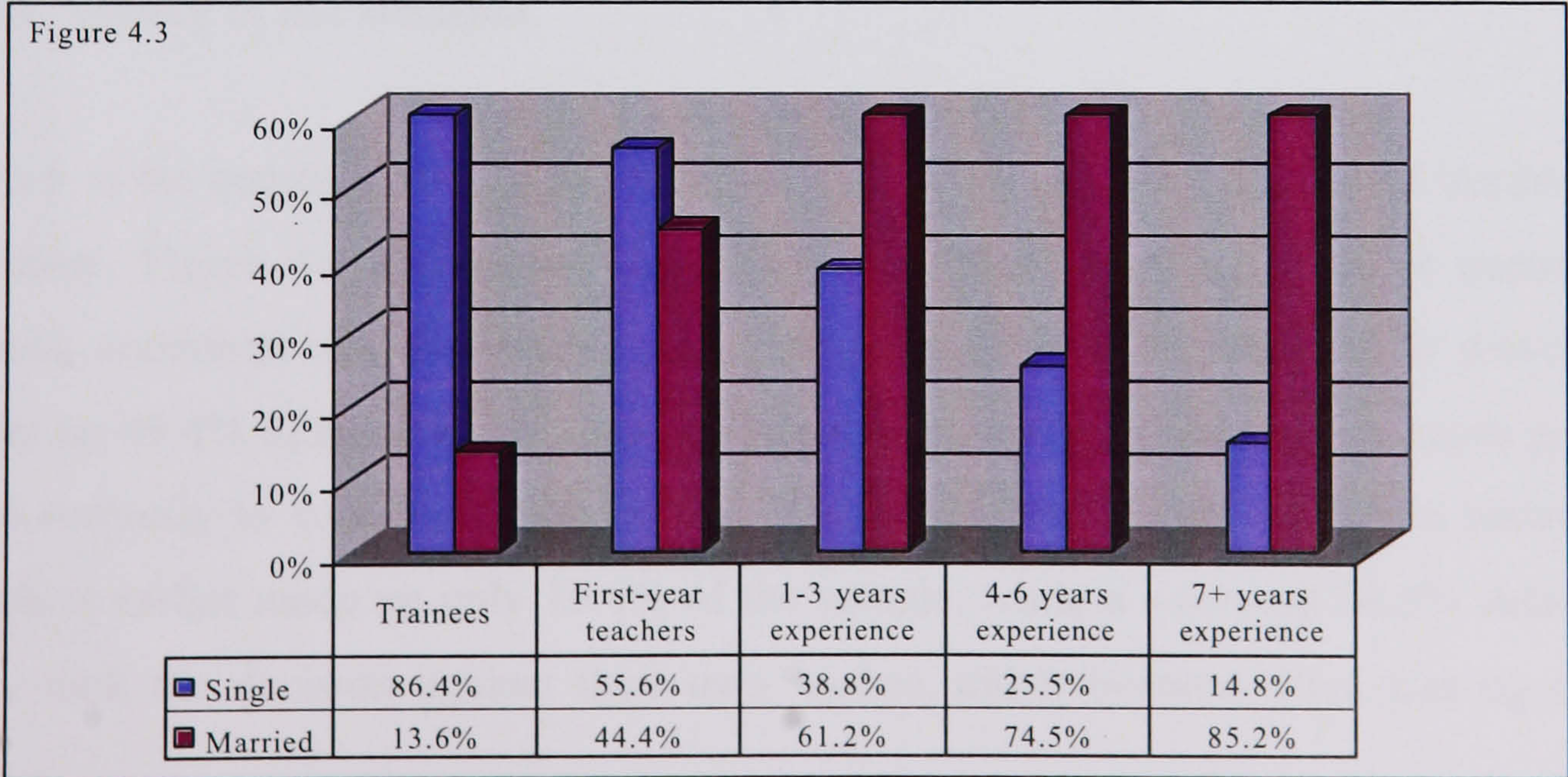


Figure 4.3: Teaching Experience and Marital Status (N=189)



4. **Motherhood:** 51.9% of respondents have no children; of which 21.6% are married. Among those who do, the maximum was 7, and the average age of a child was 1.4 years: 74.4% of children were under 4. Their young age could have implications for the career concerns and attitudes of mothers, who are often stressfully engaged juggling family and work. Having very young children means increased demands on time and effort. The majority of mothers were in the 25-29 age group.
5. **Teaching Experience:** The average length of teaching experience among the sample of teachers (student teachers are not included since they are still training) was 3.4 years (SD=2.7). The Median and the Mode are both 3.0, the minimum being a few months, and 10 years the maximum. This is, again, a reflection of the relatively young teaching workforce.

4.3. What Attracts Omani Women to Teaching?

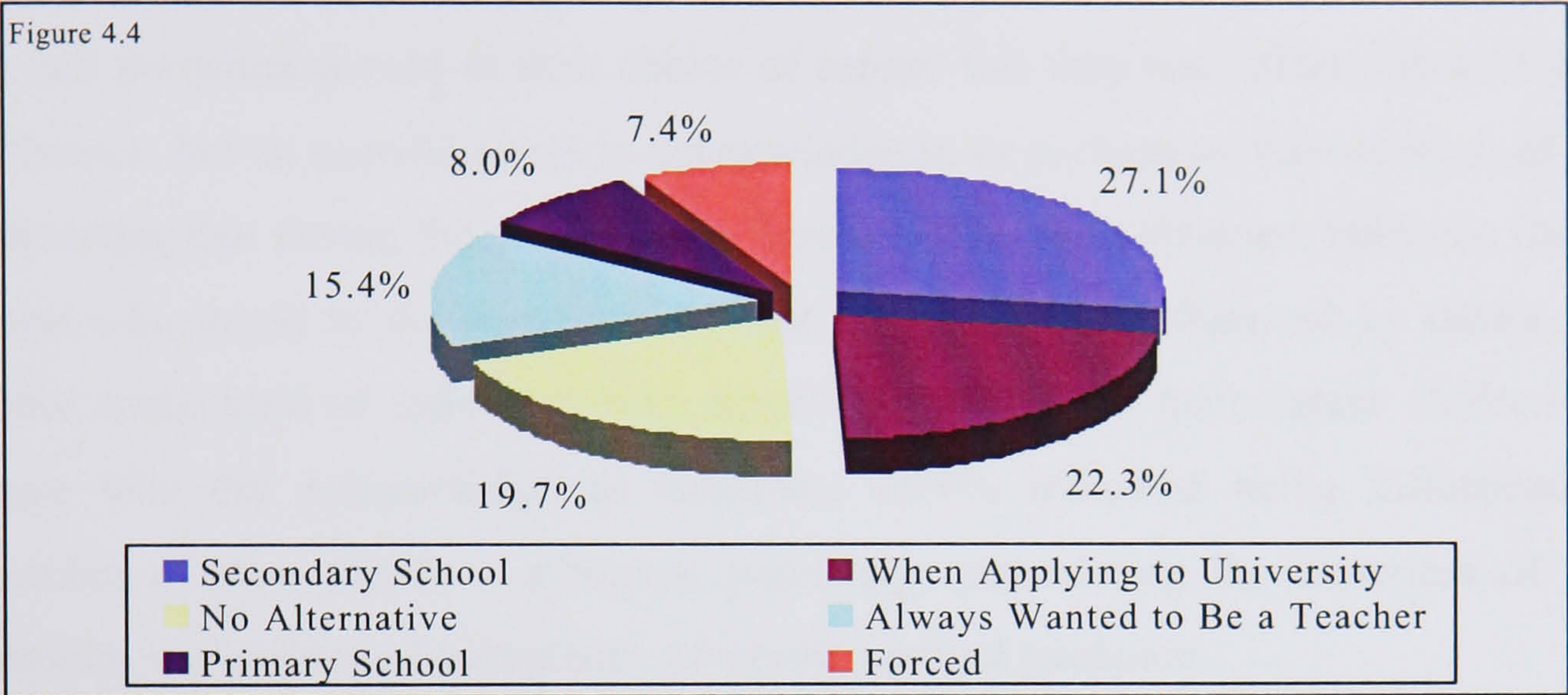
The second part of the questionnaires dealt mainly with the respondents' motives to join teaching. It sought to uncover the reasons why Omani women consider a career in teaching, and any influences on such decisions. The point at which such decisions are taken was also considered. Such variables were considered to find out if they had a later impact on teachers' development, attitudes and levels of satisfaction. In chapter six I further develop a link between gender and career choice.

4.3.1. Timing of the Decision

Item 5 in the questionnaire asked respondents at what point they considered teaching as a career. Figure 4.4 shows that those who considered teaching while at secondary school, combined with those who made the decision when they applied to university make up 49.4% of respondents. This is understandable since during these stages people start seriously to consider career options. Those who showed an interest in becoming teachers earlier made up only 15.4% of the sample, while a worrying 34.5% indicated they took the decision against their own wishes, either because there was no other

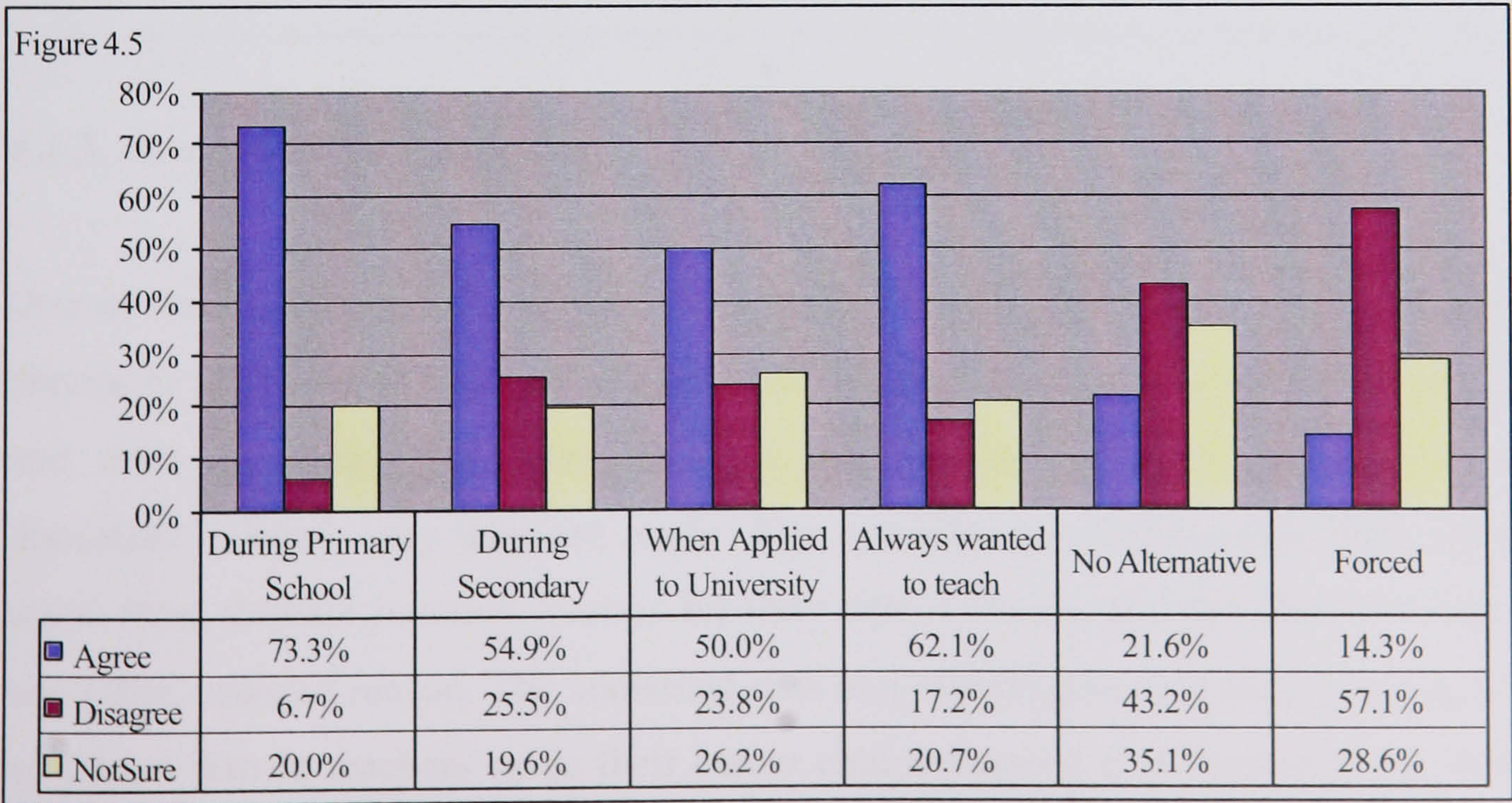
option or they were forced to become teachers. Most respondents decide late or against their own judgement, and only a minority have vocations.

Figure 4.4: Timing of the Decision to Become a Teacher (N=188)



Among the respondents it was found that the likelihood of choosing teaching again was highly associated ($p<.01$) with the point at which respondents considered teaching as a career (Figure 4.5). Those who chose teaching at primary school or had always wanted to be teachers tended to agree that they would choose teaching again; those who went into teaching unwillingly were more likely not to repeat their choice. This illustrates the relative impact of initial desire on any subsequent interest in becoming a teacher.

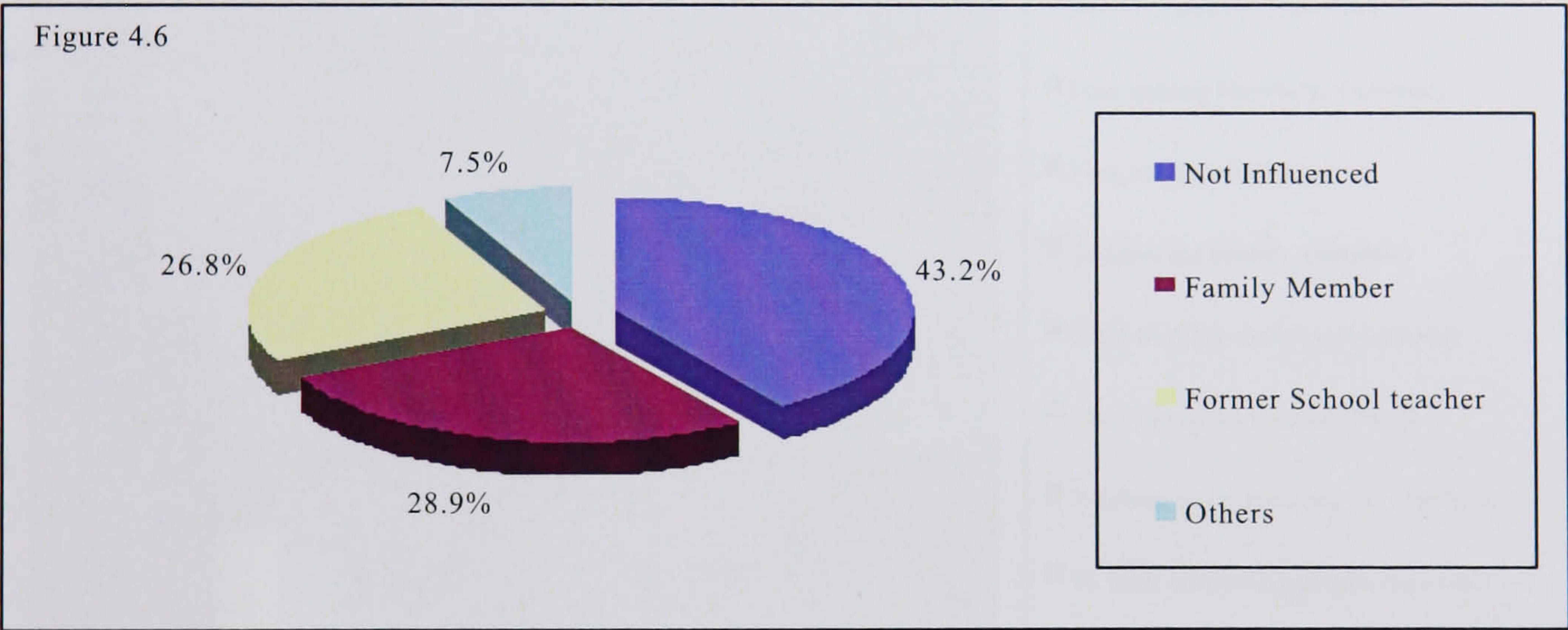
Figure 4.5: Timing of Decision and Choose Teaching Again (N=187)



4.3.2. Influences on Career Choice

In an attempt to discover the impact of social influences on respondents’ choices of a teaching career, they were asked to indicate whether certain people had influenced their decision (Figure 4.6). The largest group of respondents (43.2%) denied being influenced by any particular person in their choice of career: this may not reflect a lack of specific influence, but an unwillingness to acknowledge it, or perhaps an unawareness of it. It is interesting that during the interviews different results were obtained; subjects, including those who stated in the questionnaire that they were not influenced by others, talked about some kind of influence, both direct or indirect, on their career choice. Among those who did acknowledge an influence, 28.9% indicated being influenced by a member of their family – a logical percentage considering the closeness of Omani families, and continued acceptance of strong parental guidance.

Figure 4.6: Influences on Career Choice (N=189)

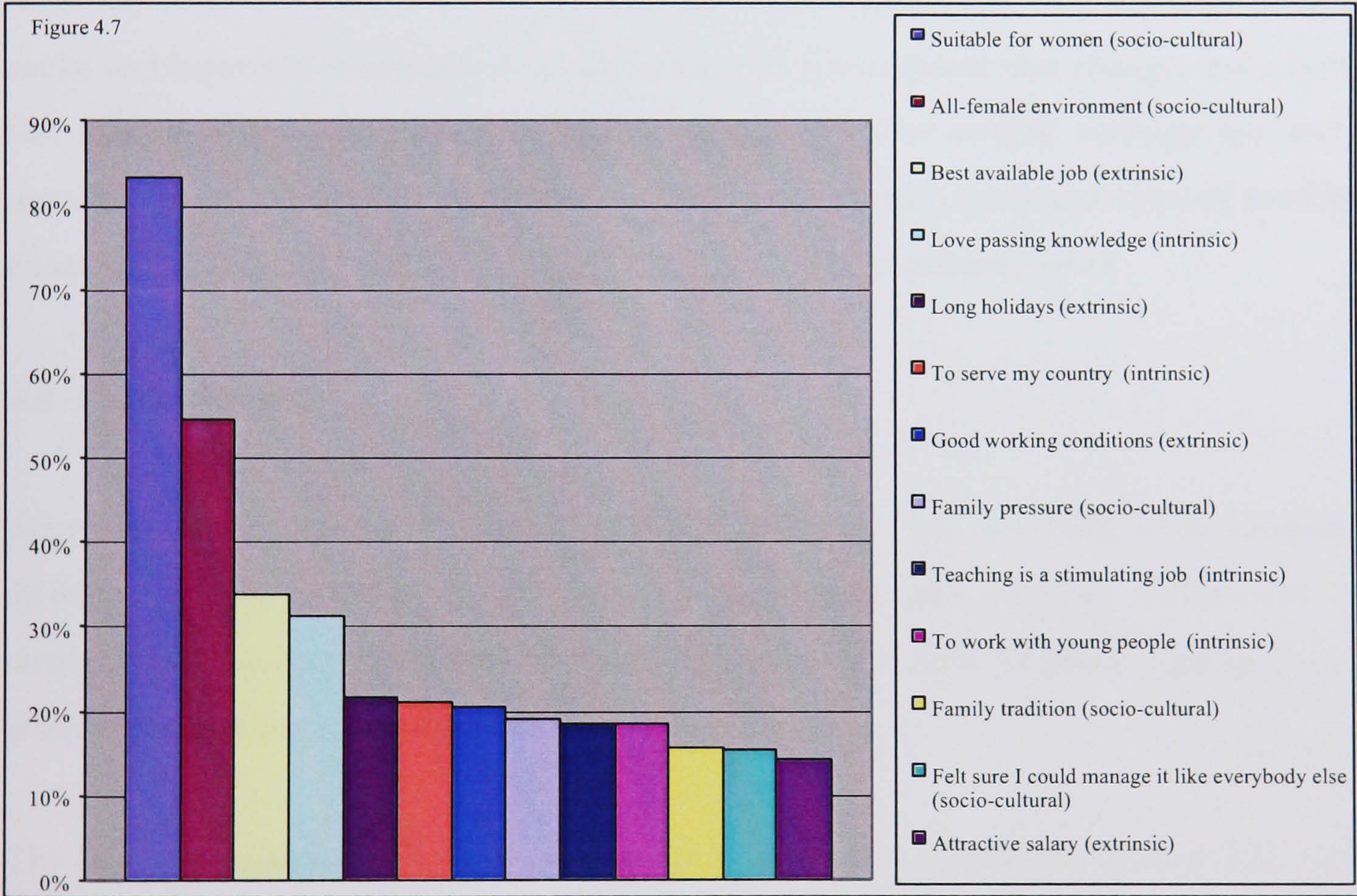


4.3.3. Reasons to Join Teaching

One of the main objectives of this study is to discover why so many Omani females choose to teach; since teaching is their most frequent job choice (see 1.3.4 and 1.4.5), and since the pedagogic sector relies on the frequency of these job choices, it is important to know why they are made. The questionnaire respondents were asked to select from thirteen putative reasons for their career choice, and the chance to identify any other, unlisted reason. The statistical data analysis (Figure 4.7) indicates that 83.2% of Omani female teachers made their career choice because it is “suitable” for women.

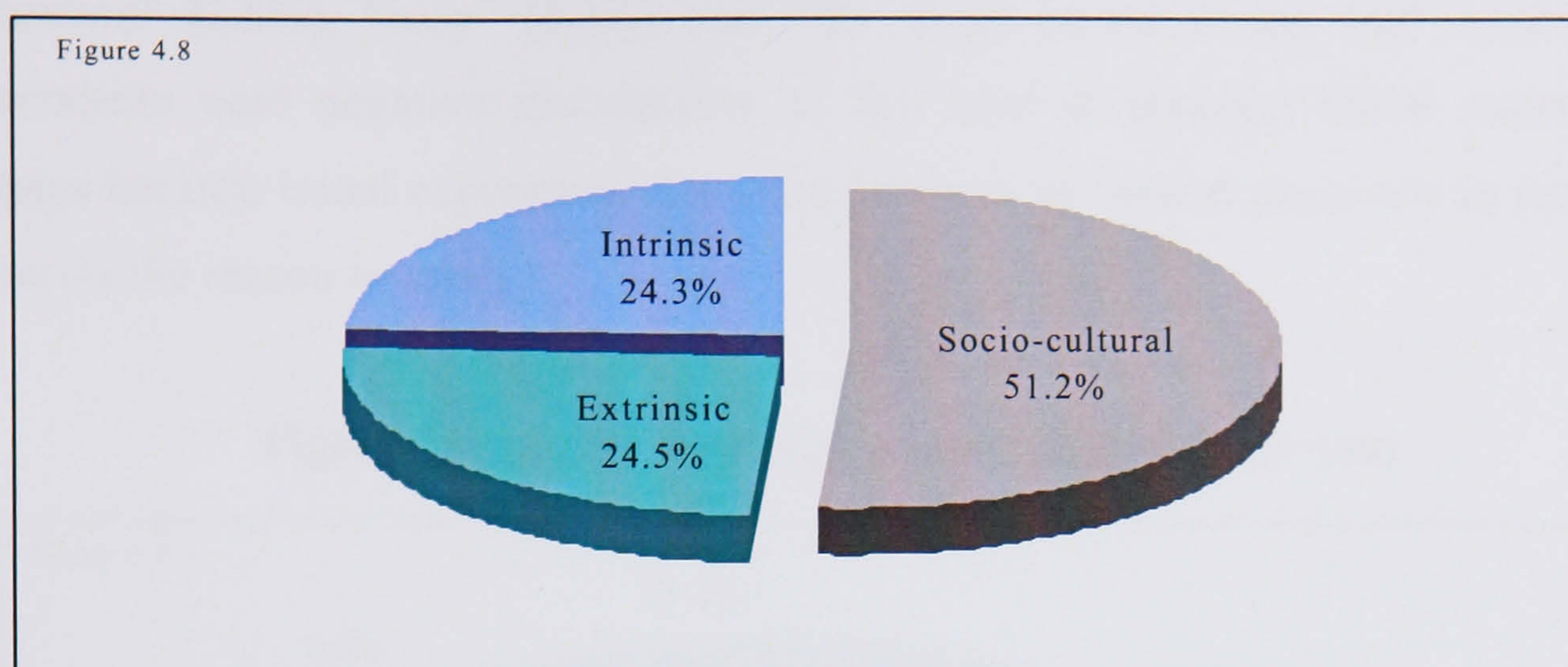
The second most frequent motive (54.7%) is that teaching is the only career with an all-female environment (state schools in Oman are single-sex). The least frequent motive behind choosing teaching is the attractive salary (14.2%): this could either mean respondents consider teaching salaries unattractive, or that material benefits are no motive in a “vocational” context. Intrinsic motives are ranked more lowly - fourth: the love of passing on knowledge; ninth: teaching as a stimulating and satisfying career; and tenth: the desire to work with young people. Overall, Omani females who choose to teach are not necessarily interested in the pedagogic task, but rather in the convenience the career represents: this could have far-reaching effects on motivation, commitment and job satisfaction.

Figure 4.7: Reasons to Become a Teacher (N=189)



Motives are divided into three categories: intrinsic, extrinsic and socio-cultural motives: the most common motives fall within the socio-cultural category (Figure 4.8). This highlights the influential roles both society and culture play, career choice being just one clear effect of such influences. Socio-cultural expectations play a major role in Omani females’ choices of career and the frequency of extrinsic and intrinsic motives is almost equal in this study, but less than half as frequent as socio-cultural motives.

Figure 4.8: Frequencies of the Three Main Motives (N=189)



Interactions between the profile (respondents' age groups and/or teaching experiences) and the career choice were statistically measured to determine if there is a change over time: my sample comes from two cohorts that have experienced very different Omani social and historical situations; it should always be remembered that changes have been fast and, in many areas, thoroughgoing since 1970. The overall findings are that, regardless of the radical changes that occurred in Oman with the introduction of modern education, society and culture still play prominent roles in people's lives.

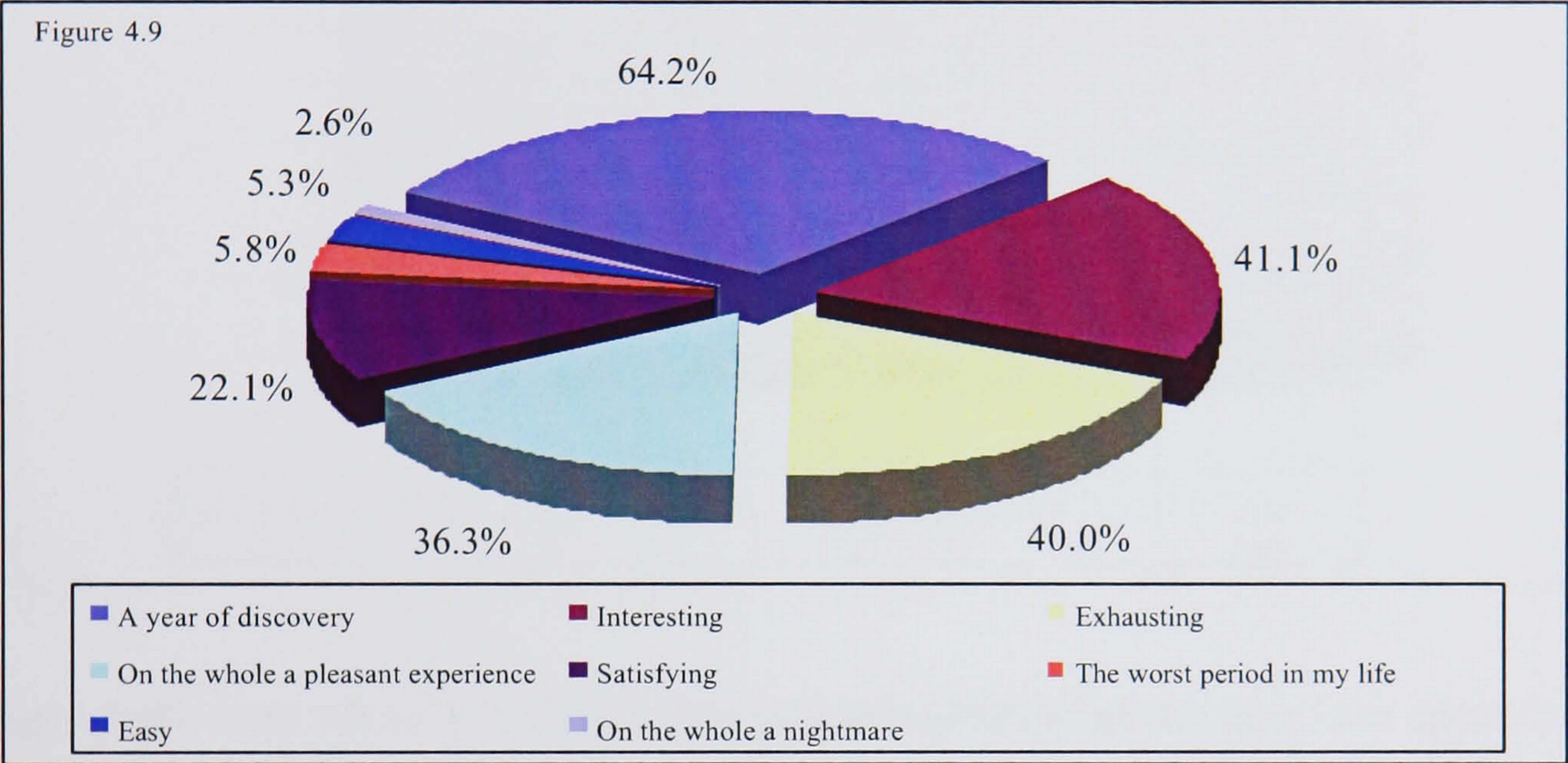
4.4. Career Stages

Many questions explored teachers' career progression. My objective is to compare different groups, categorized by teaching experience, and identify differences or similarities. One question asked respondents to describe their initiation into teaching, while the others were about their current situations.

The question regarding initiation (number 10) asked for a description of their first year in teaching; trainees were also asked to describe their first term in teaching practice. Respondents could choose from twelve adjectives, and were given the chance to add any other they thought appropriate. The most frequently used response was 8 – "a year of discovery" – chosen by more than 64%; the next most frequent was "interesting" (41.1%) and then "exhausting" (40%) (see Figure 4.9). The amount of discovery done during initial pedagogic experiences can deepen interest and help the novice endure and benefit from that intense learning period, with all the workload they will inevitably

experience. (Huberman, 1993) The least frequent descriptions were “on the whole a nightmare” (2.6%), “easy” (5.3%) and “the worst period in my life” (5.8%). Few respondents used negative descriptions of this kind to describe initial experiences, perhaps because initial experiences are more likely to be viewed positively in retrospect, whatever the reason to teach.

Figure 4.9: Initiation - Frequency of Description (N=190)

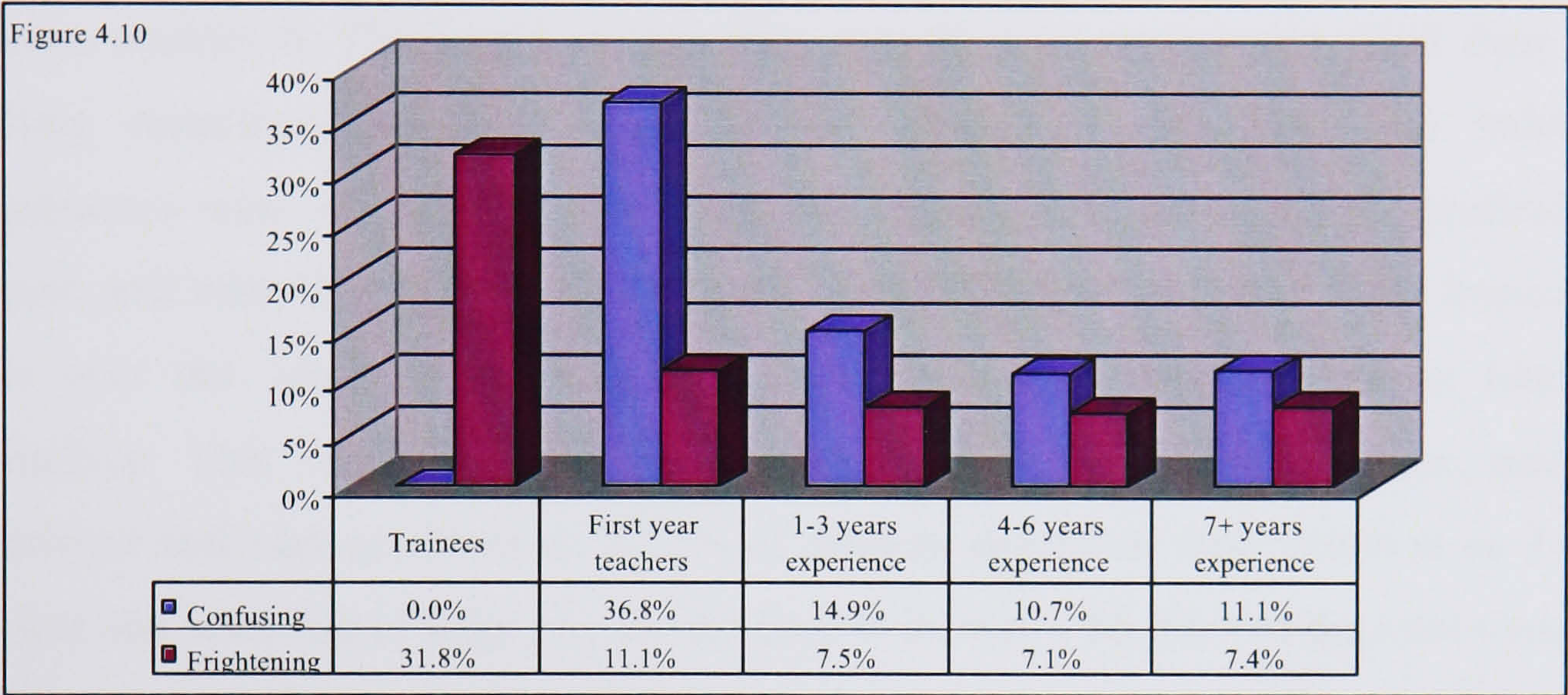


There were significant associations ($p < .05$) between teaching experience and adjectives 4 “confusing” and 5 “frightening” (Figure 4.10). Since trainees and novice teachers are the only groups enjoying initial teaching experience, the rest of the sample answered the question in retrospect. This could mean a filtering effect: respondents now consider they have a better understanding of experience, and indeed better pedagogic experiences overall, and may disregard past negative perceptions.

Novices used the adjective “confusing” to describe experiences more frequently than any other group. However, while none of the trainees chose “confusing” to describe their first term in teaching practice, 36.8% of new teachers did. On the other hand, about a third of trainees use the term “frightening” - more than any other group. Being apprehensive about a new experience could be the dominant feeling among trainees. Will they be able to stand up in front of a class and teach? Will they be able to answer pupils’ questions and challenges? New teachers, having successfully gone through the practical training period, might be confused about their responsibilities and what is

expected of them. A major complaint is that training does not prepare teachers well for the classroom - they start work and find that things are done differently from the theory learnt in pre-service training programmes. They might even disagree with school practice. Both result in confusion.

Figure 4.10: Teaching Experience and Description of First Experience (N=190)

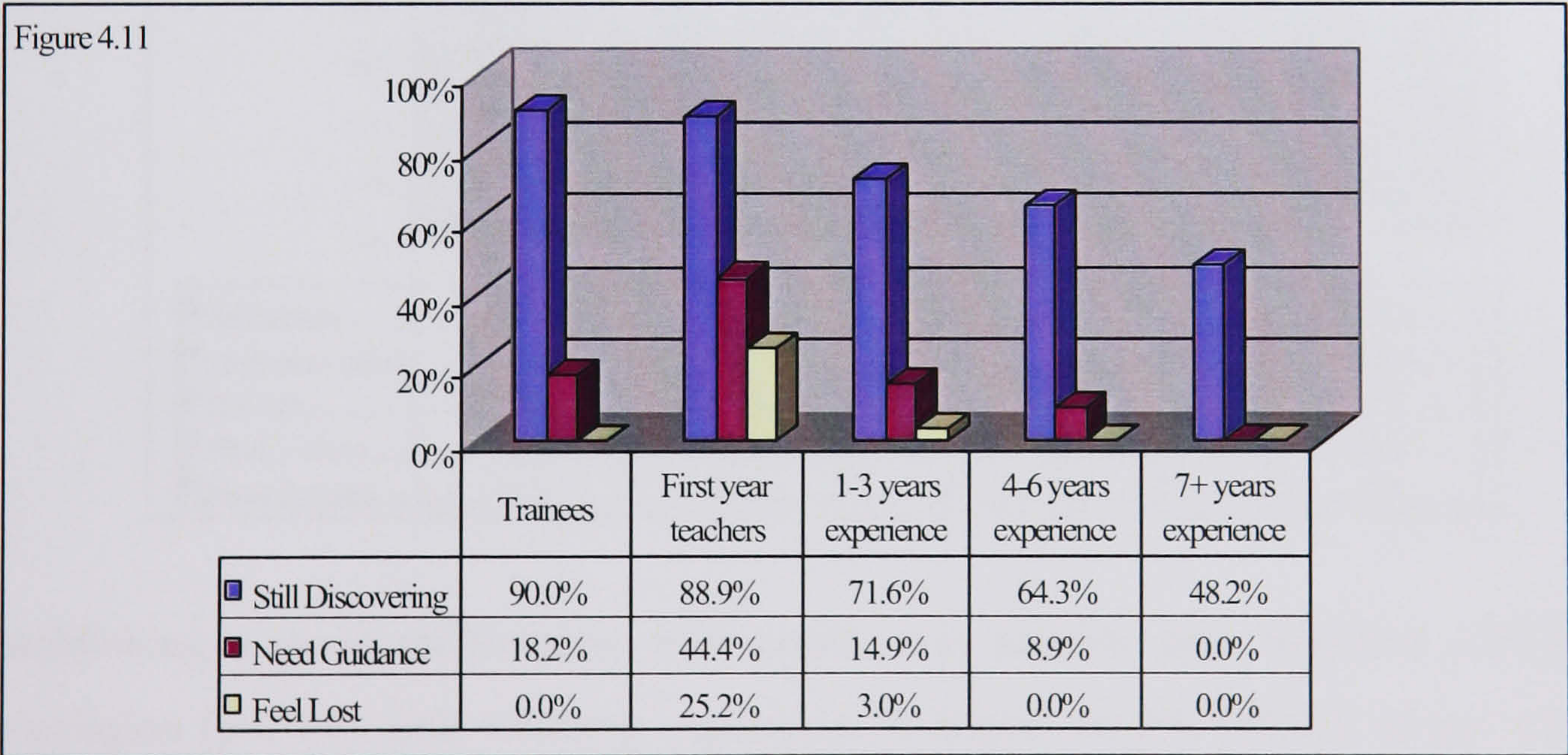


Respondents were asked to describe their present situation as teachers (see appendices 7 and 8). They were given eight statements to choose from. The majority (70%) chose to describe their current situation as 2 – “I am still discovering a lot of things about teaching and pupils”, followed by 3 – “I have mastered the necessary teaching skills” (32.6%) and 4 – “I feel bored and long for some new ideas in teaching” (30%). This combination is superficially contradictory, with respondents veering between confidence, reticence and finally detachment. This mixture of sensitivity, arrogance, ennui and naiveté is partly a result of a split between a relatively youthful teaching force, and those in the early to mid career who have learned basic skills but need to master new ideas if they do not want their job to become routine. The scarcity of in-service courses adds especially to the latter’s frustration as they have no direct means, other than their own experience, and possibly that of their colleagues, to develop professionally.

Significant associations ($p < .01$) were found between teaching experience and situation numbers 2 – “I am still discovering a lot of things about teaching and pupils”, 6 – “I need some guidance but I don’t know where to get it from” and 7 – “I feel lost and long

for some new ideas in teaching” (Figure 4.11). It is clear that as subjects gain experience they may tend to choose statement 2 less – maybe as they slip towards ennui. Most trainees (90.9%) and novices (88.9%) chose this statement to describe their current state (see Figure 4.11), identifying a clear link between optimism and the early years of pedagogy. However, optimism is clearly fragile. More new teachers (44.4%) than any other group said they needed guidance but they did not know where to get it - situation number 6. This could explain why over 36% of novices described their new teaching experience as “confusing”. In the context of this study, no induction programmes were on offer to new teachers; overall, they receive little professional support, and what they get is usually in the form of between one and three inspectors’ visits over the whole academic year - other than that, they are left to fend for themselves. This could also explain the other association found between teaching experience and current situation; 22.2% of novices described their situation as 7 – “I feel lost and need lots of help”: by far the largest section – 66.7% - of the total choosing this description. These findings illustrate the importance of providing thorough and specific support for new teachers, to help them adjust to their new roles and settings.

Figure 4.11: Teaching Experience and Current Situation (N=190)

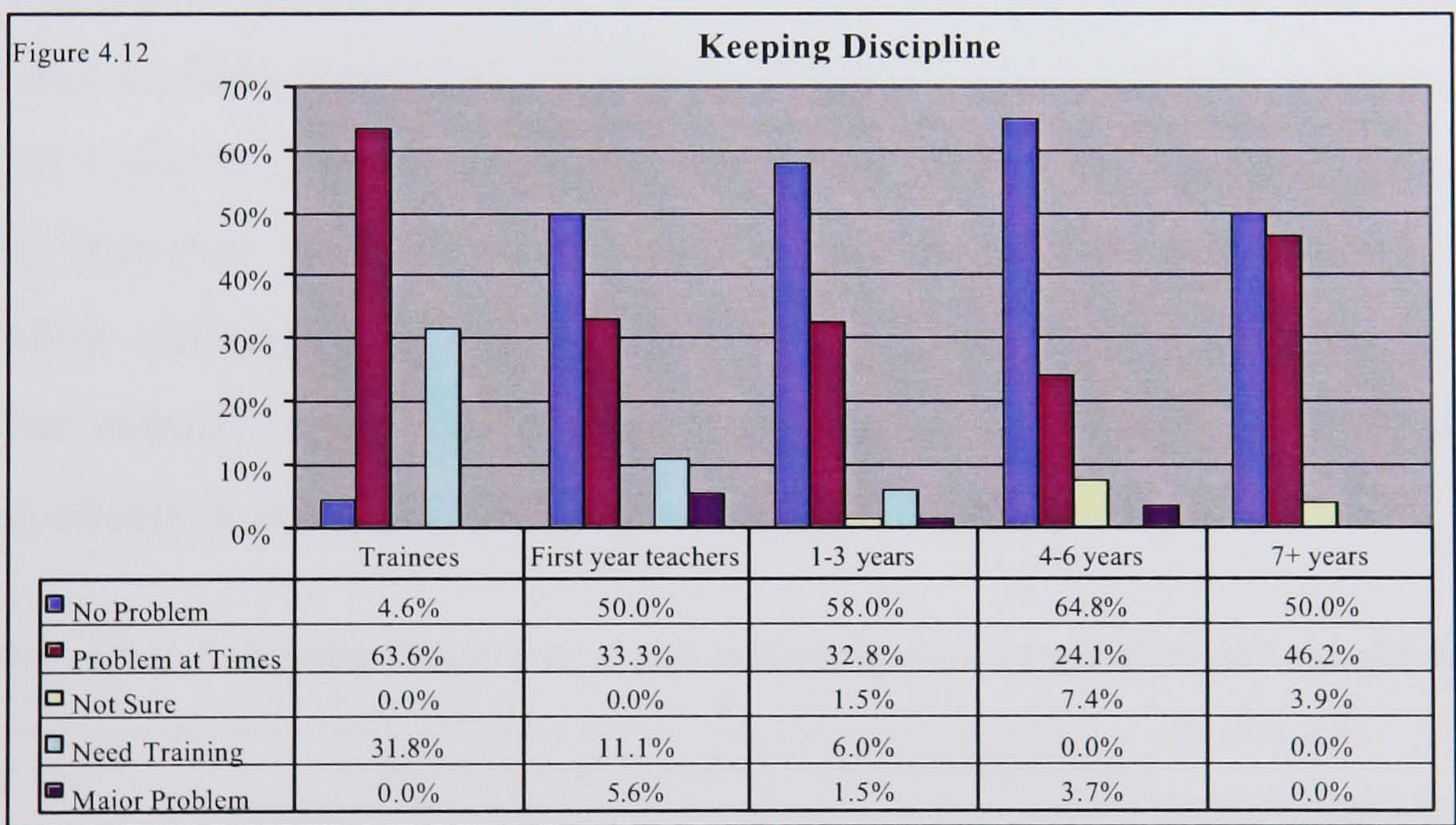


Regarding professional development, subjects were asked to respond to 12 items in the Likert scale format, from 1 (not a problem at all) to 5 (has always been a major problem for me). There are strong associations to be found between teaching experience and the following issues: Issue 1 - keeping discipline in the classroom; issue 2 - establishing a

good relationship with pupils; issue 7 - selecting and teaching content effectively, and issue 9 - working productively with other teachers.

With regard to keeping discipline (Figure 4.12), 51.9% of respondents, including novices, said it was not a problem at all, while 35.8% said it was a problem at times. 31.8% of trainees and 11.1% of novices said that they needed some training in this area. Although more trainees and novices said they needed help with discipline, the percentages are low compared to studies on trainees' and novices' problems in other contexts (for example Veenman, 1984). This suggests pupils' disruptive behaviour may not be a widespread problem for teachers in Oman, and that problems may be localised (perhaps due to complex socio-cultural stresses- schools in high socio-economic areas suffer more students' misbehaviour than some schools in poorer areas) linked with poor teaching skills, or as a factor of lack of appropriate collegiate or other support.

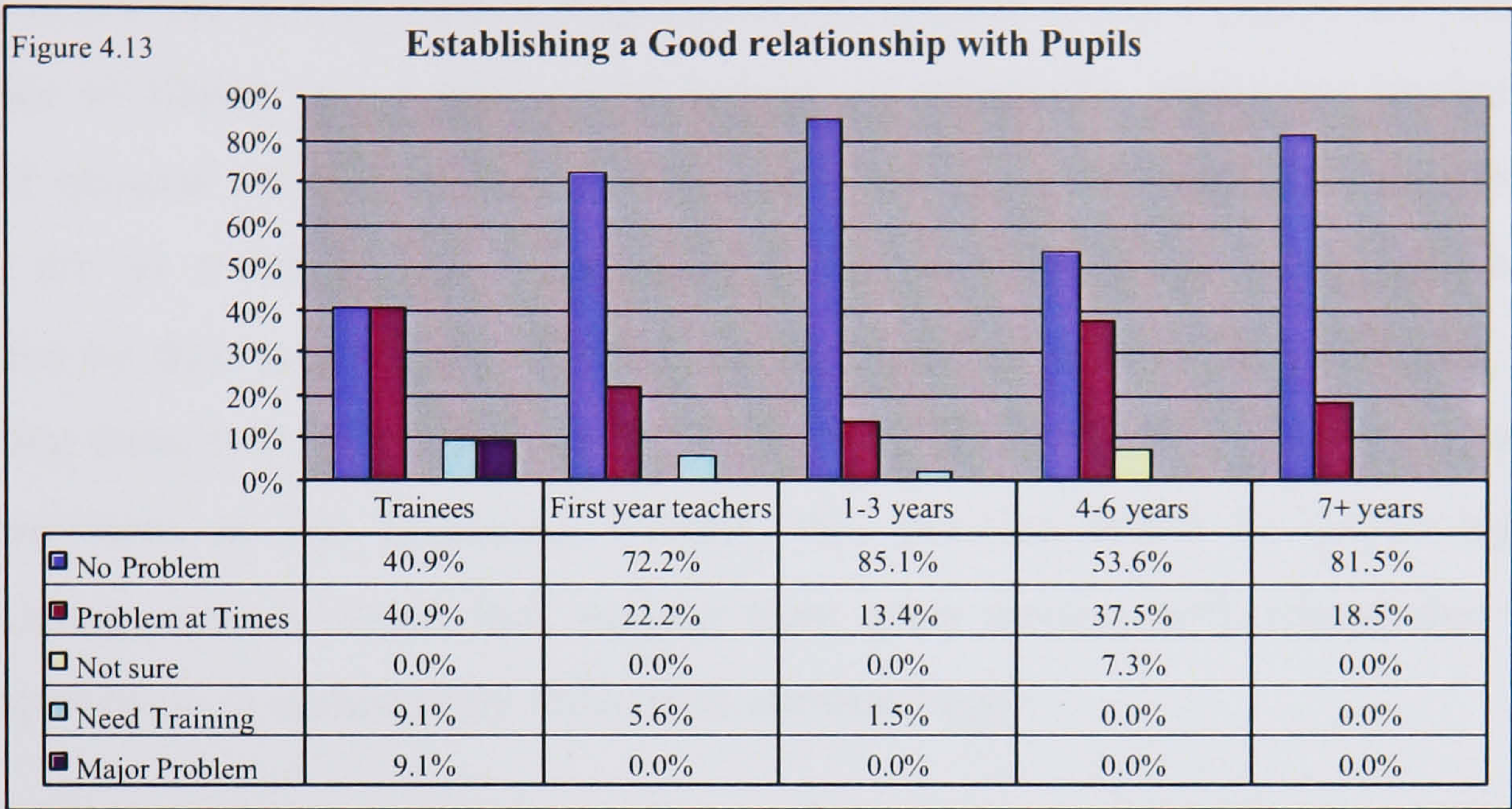
Figure 4.12: Teaching Experience and Discipline (N=187)



Establishing a good relationship with pupils was another area where a significant association ($p < .01$) with teaching experience is found. 69.3% (40.9% of the trainees and 72.2% of the novices) said that this was no problem at all. Only 9.1% of trainees and 5.6% of novices said they needed training in this area, and only 9.1% of trainees said this had always been a major problem (Figure 4.13). Pedagogic skills may well be the issue here, therefore. It should be understood that pupils in Oman like to establish a good relationship with their teachers, especially new ones. Perhaps this habit is

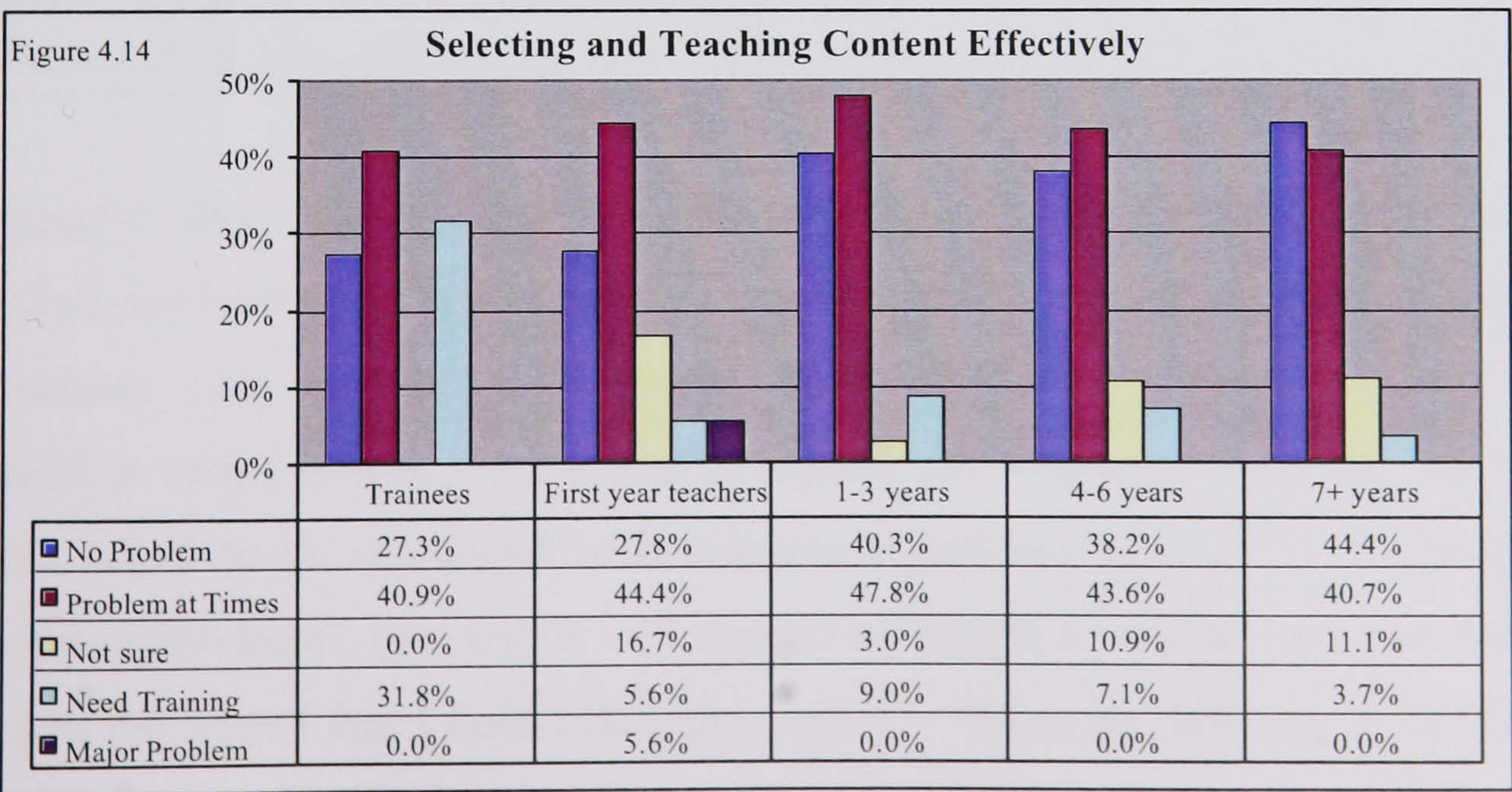
encouraged by the youthfulness of Omani teachers, and thus the closeness in ages between teachers and pupils. I will examine this phenomenon further in chapter seven.

Figure 4.13: Teaching Experience and Relationship with Pupils (N=189)



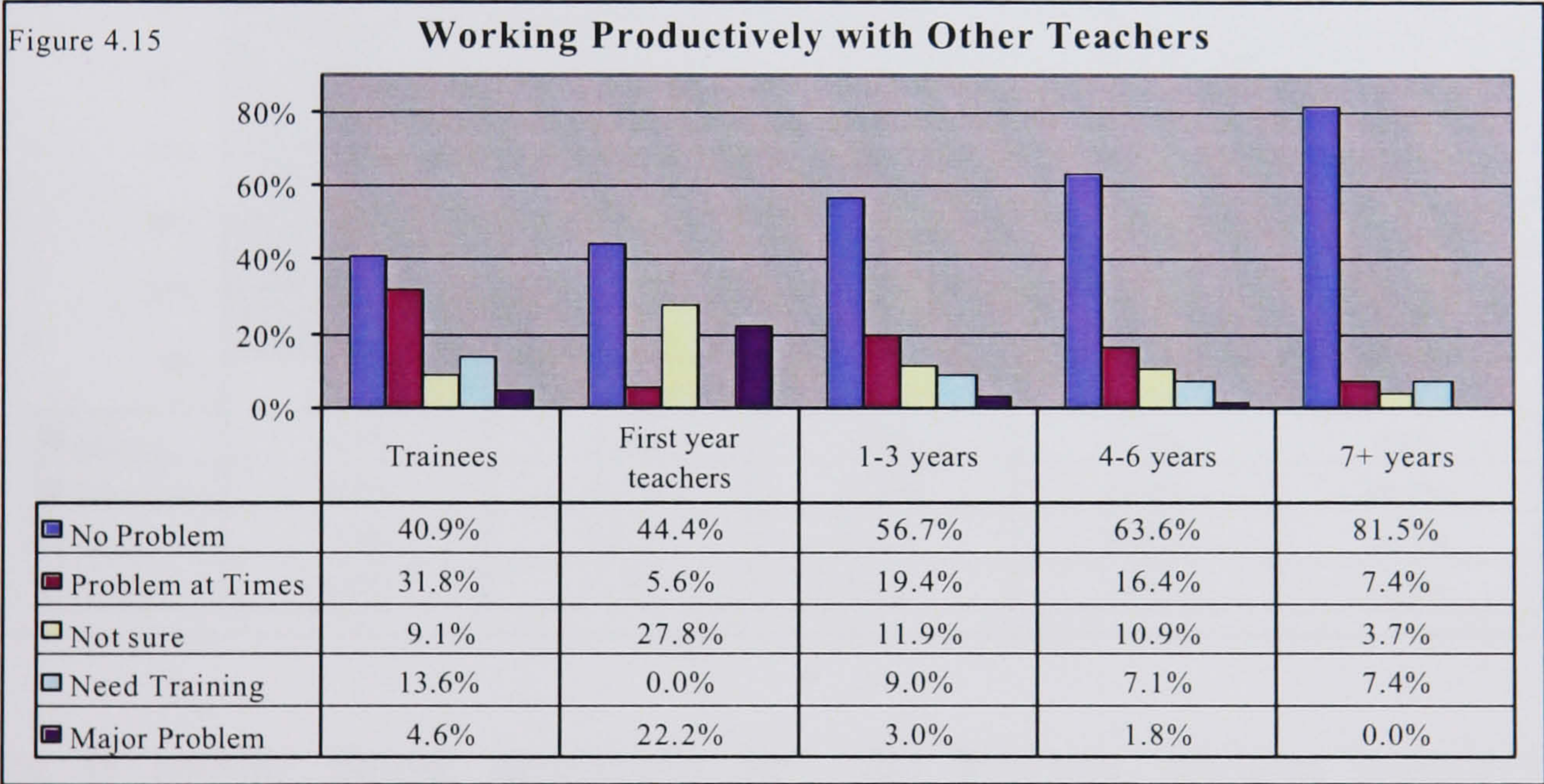
Another significant association ($p < .05$) is found between teaching experience and selecting and teaching curriculum effectively (Figure 4.14). Naturally, trainees and less experienced teachers tend to face more difficulties in this area because of a lack of experience. However, the difference is not that great, perhaps because teachers in Oman have to follow and teach a national curriculum, and do not have to select lesson content. The teacher manual gives step by step strategies for teaching different lessons and structuring attendant activities: individual initiative is not encouraged.

Figure 4.14: Teaching Experience and Selecting and Teaching Content (N=189)



Working productively with other teachers seems to be difficult for trainees and new teachers – a problem which may be exacerbated by the rigid curricular demands that may atomise rather than create a collegiate spirit. 13.6% of trainees said they needed training in this area; 4.6% of trainees and 22.2% of new teachers said working with other teachers had always been a major problem (Figure 4.15). Perhaps the difficulty partly lies in fitting into a new social setting, in which the trainee or novice feels awkward because of their status. The trainees’ set-up is different from the novices: trainees are in a school on a temporary basis, surrounded by other trainees and counselled by their supervisors; novices are appointed to schools in areas with which and among those with whom they might not even be familiar – the ministry can appoint them anywhere in the Sultanate. Clearly this practice could be psychologically disassociating: novices might lack support from other novices with whom they could share experiences in disturbingly unfamiliar surroundings.

Figure 4.15: Teaching Experience and Colleagues (N=189)

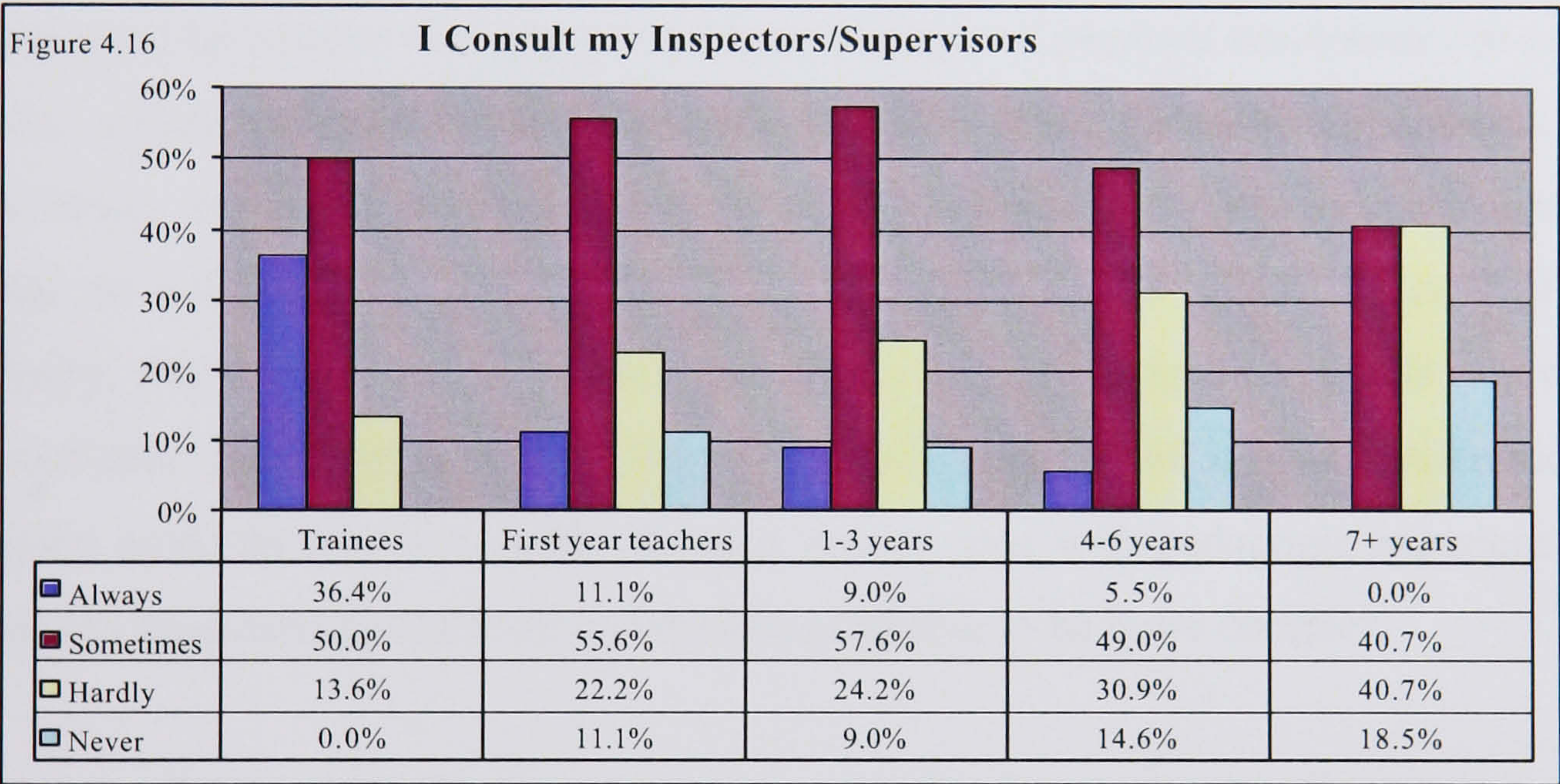


Surprisingly, there is no clear association between teaching experience and the difficulties teachers face. However, there are a number of significant correlations with the methods they employ to overcome these difficulties. Eleven methods were suggested to subjects, who were asked to indicate the frequency each was used. The methods found to be associated with teaching experience were: 2 – “I consult my inspectors/supervisors”, ($p < .01$); 4 – “I depend on myself to develop professionally by reading in the areas I feel I need help”, ($p < .01$); 6 – “I use my authority to control my

classes”, ($p < .05$); 9 – “I follow the textbook guidelines”, ($p < .01$), and 10 – “I consult other teachers regardless of their experience”, ($p < .05$).

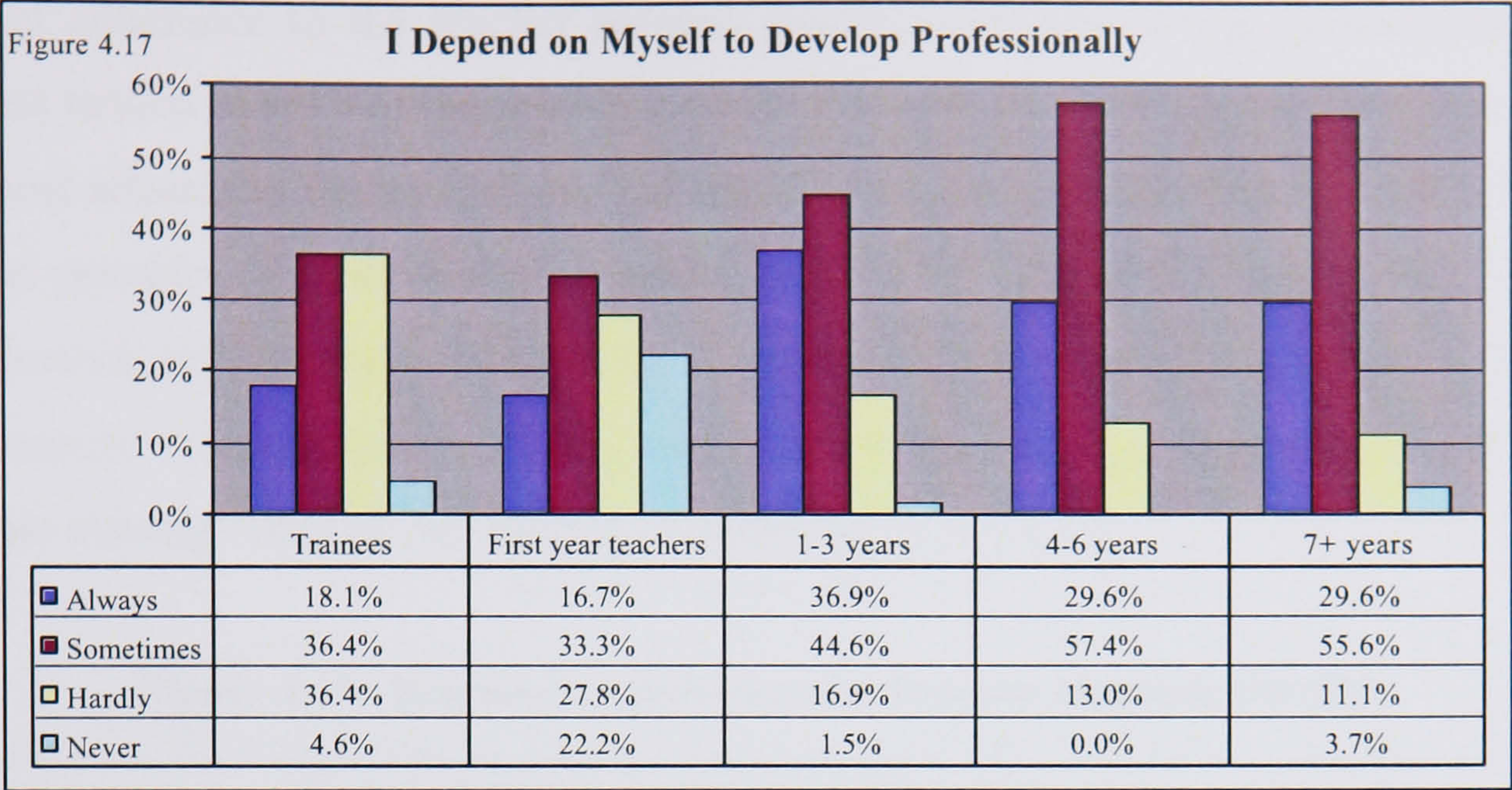
There is a high correlation ($p < .01$) between teaching experience and the frequency with which teachers consult their inspectors or supervisors. Trainees and less experienced teachers tend to consult these figures more than more experienced teachers (Figure 4.16). This could be understandable since, during training and the onset of a career, teachers need more guidance, and are obliged to consult supervisors. On the other hand, experienced teachers could feel, because of their level of experience, they do not need such help, or feel constrained from articulating such a need (or perhaps even thinking of articulating it).

Figure 4.16: Teaching Experience and Supervisors (N=188)



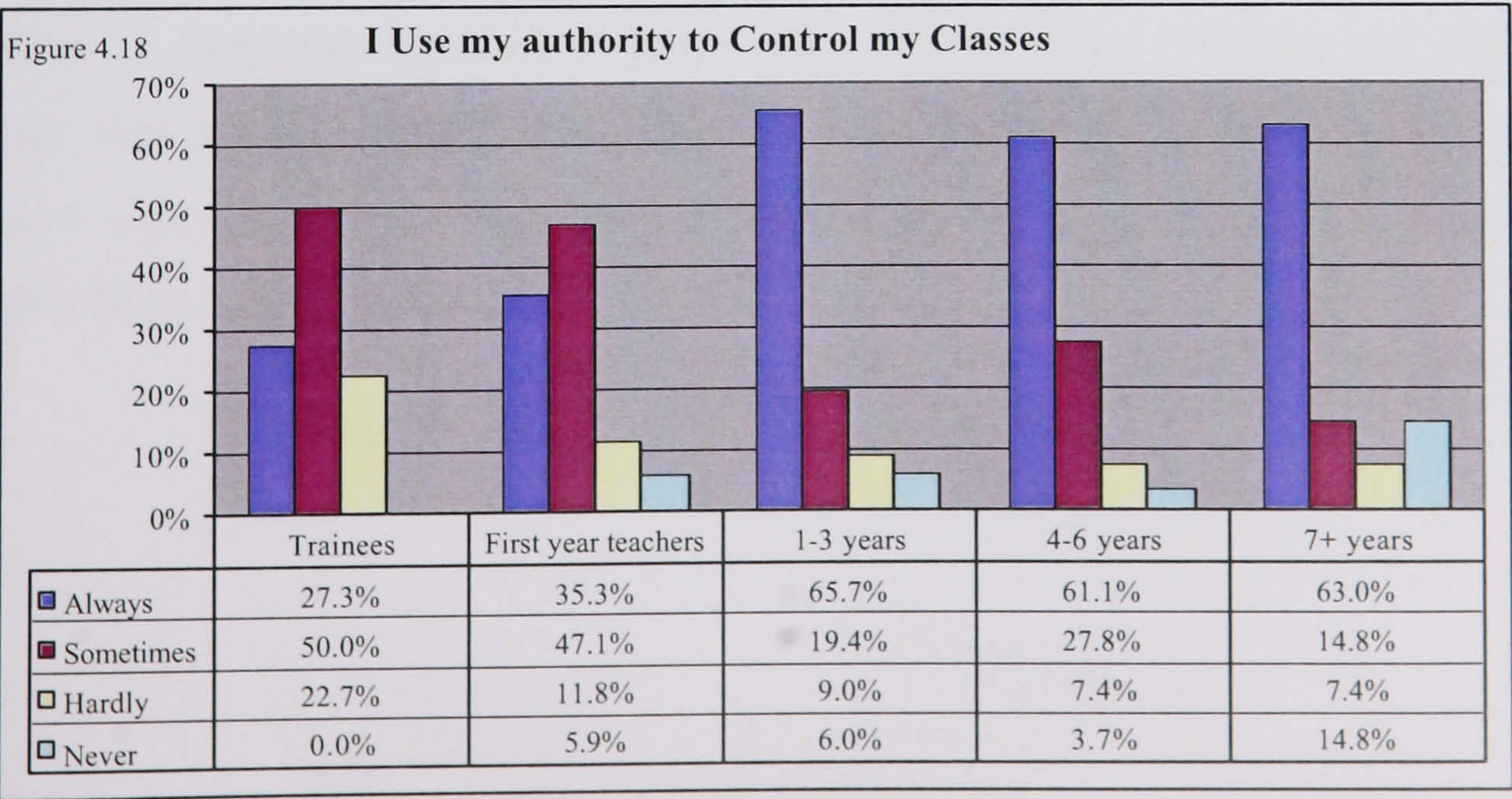
There is another strong association ($p < .01$) between teaching experience and independence. More experienced teachers said they depended more on themselves to develop professionally than on their less experienced colleagues (Figure 4.17). The practical experience teachers get builds confidence, allowing the assumption of responsibility for personal pedagogic development.

Figure 4.17: Teaching Experience and Independence (N=185)



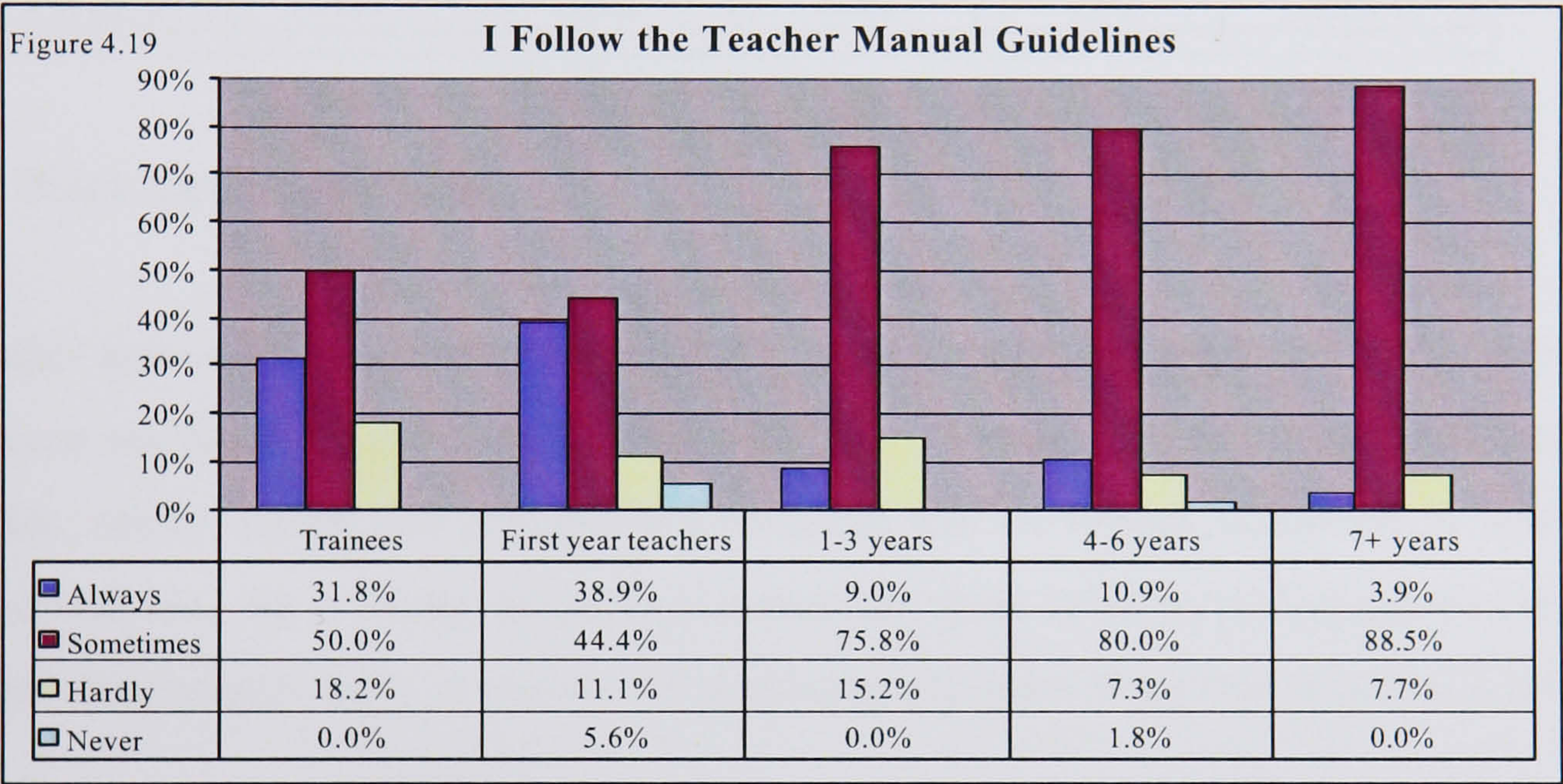
Another moderate correlation ($p < .05$) is between teaching experience and the use of personal authority – understood by respondents as the learnt, acquired or intuitive pedagogical techniques that impress with the strength of personal resolution - to control pupils, which increases with experience. (Figure 4.18) Perhaps, as teachers gain experience, they establish their status as authority figures not only in classrooms but within the collegiate hierarchy, where they are regarded with respect because of their seniority, and also in their self image: perception of self changes to include a new role of confident, informed authority. However, confidence in the use and perception of personal authority may not simply develop year on year with pedagogic experience: the dynamics suggested by these cross-tabulations appear to be more complex.

Figure 4.18: Teaching Experience and Teacher Authority (N=187)



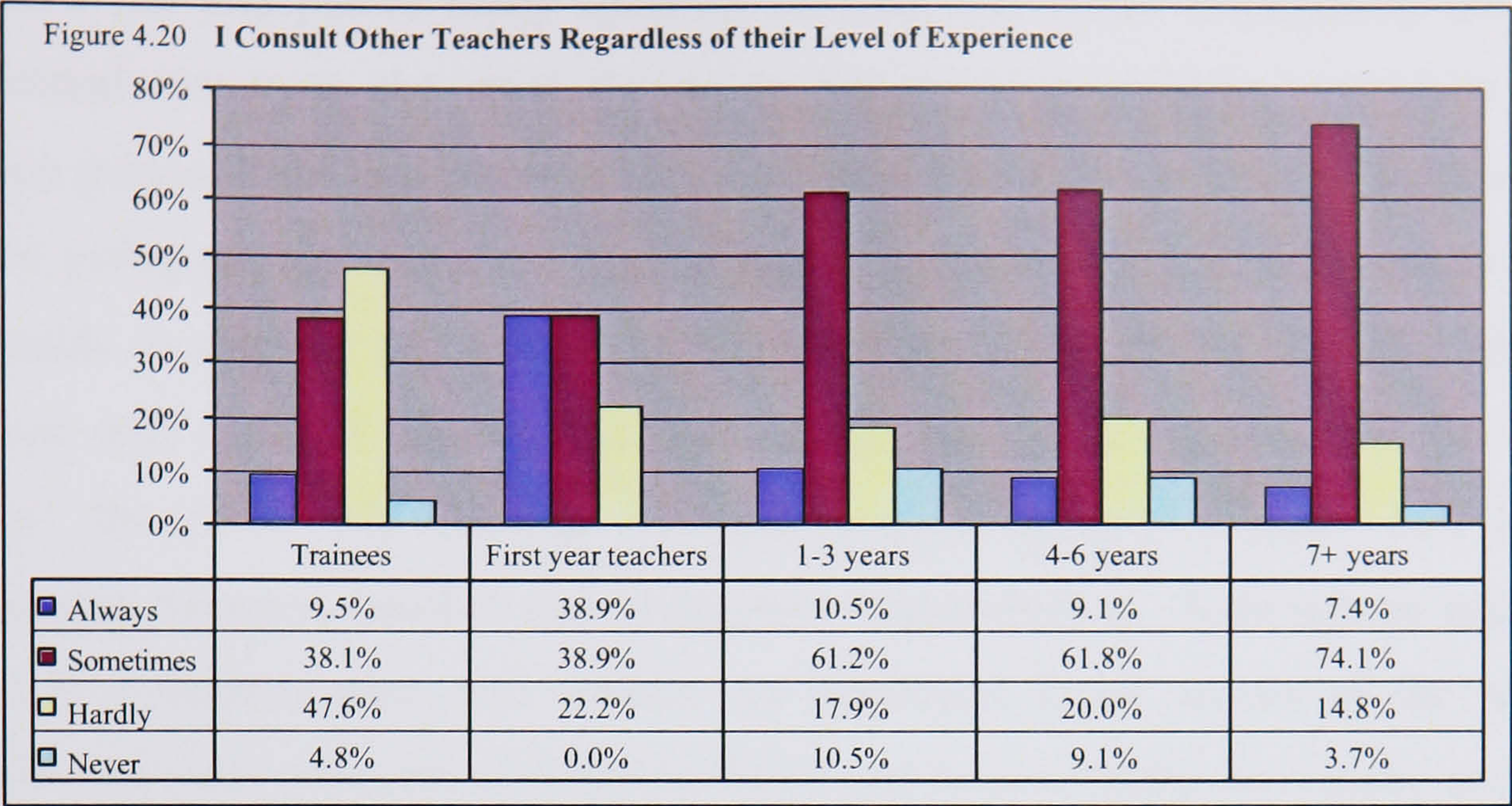
Another high association ($p < .01$) was found between teaching experience and teachers' level of adherence to the teacher manual guidelines (Figure 4.19). It was found that teachers tended to stick to the teacher manual less as they gained experience. The group that most adheres to the teacher manual was found to be novices. This is predictable – a manual provides security and assurance that they are “doing the right thing”. During this research, novices were found to be encouraged by their inspectors strictly to follow the teachers' manual (see 5.2.2.4); with experience, teachers depend less on those manuals although they do not discard them totally.

Figure 4.19: Teaching Experience and Teacher Manuals (N=187)



Finally, there was another strong correlation ($p < .05$) between teaching experience and the amount teachers consult their colleagues, regardless of experience. I found novices made significant use of colleagues whatever the level of colleagues' experience (Figure 4.20). This indicates novices thirst for all the support they can get: their unique situation puts them in desperate need of guidance (see Figure 4.11). Trainees are different. Although they are also unlike other teachers in the school, they enjoy the support of university supervisors and other trainees sharing the same experiences. New teachers might not be always so lucky.

Figure 4.20: Teaching Experience and Consulting Colleagues (N=188)



4.5. Work and Family Life

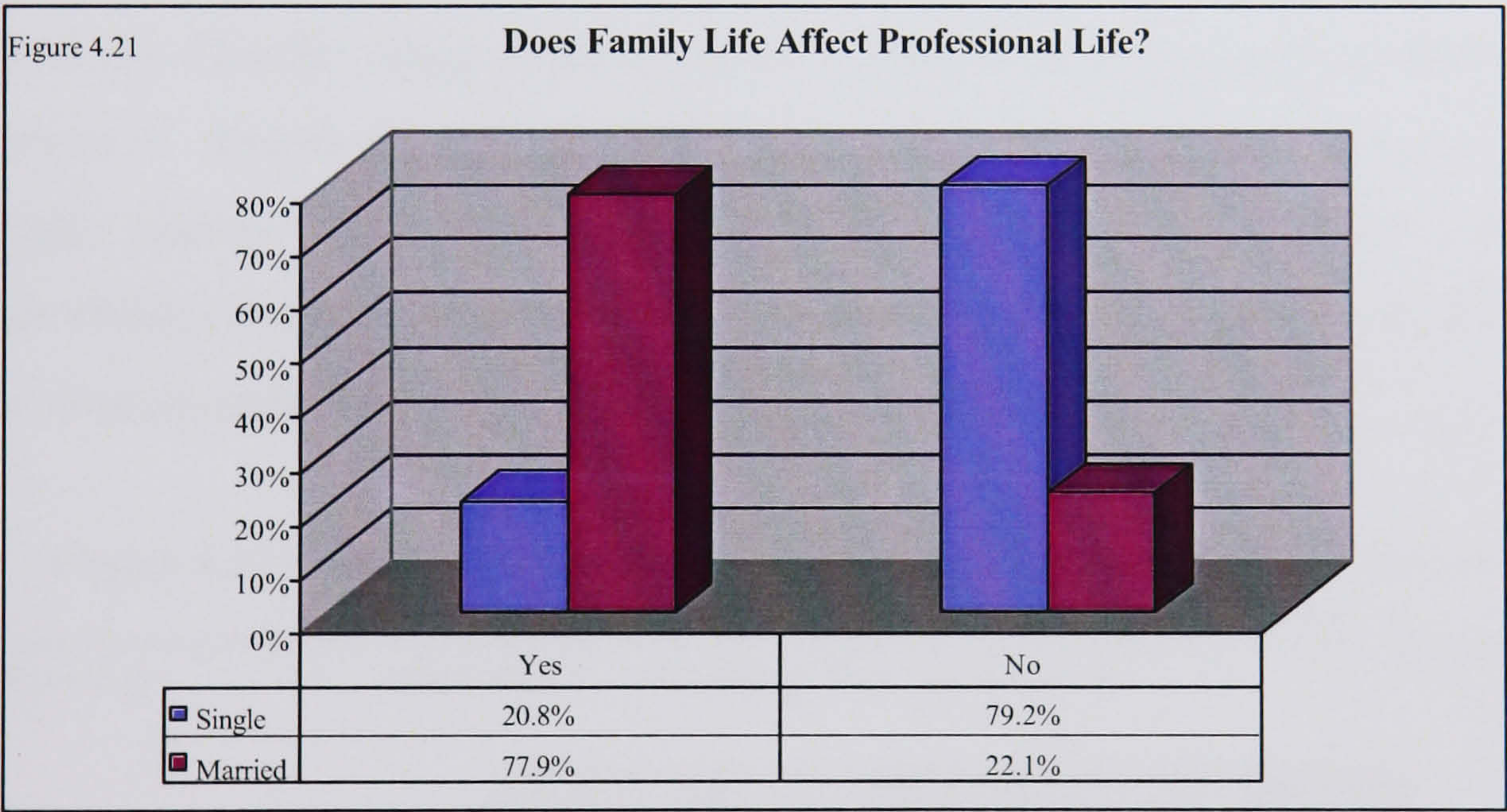
Another aspect of the human angle that this research aimed at exploring is the interplay between teachers’ personal and professional lives. In chapter 6 the connections between gender, career choice and personal commitment will be further examined. A teacher’s hinterland may be a strong factor in determining their level of pedagogic success, or indeed their contentment. A number of questionnaire items were concerned with this.

Item 21 was addressed to practising teachers, not trainees (see appendix 7). It asked if family life, especially being a wife and/or a mother, affected their jobs. The majority (46.1%) said it did “to some extent”, while only 13.2% said it affected their job “to a large extent”. 40.7% of teachers said their family roles did not affect their professional lives.

The association between this and other factors was analyzed, and I found that respondents’ marital status, age, number of children and their ages were significantly related ($p < .01$) to whether they believed their personal lives affected their professional lives. These four variables appear to be interrelated. Respondents arranged themselves naturally in cohorts according to age and marital status: younger teachers were probably single with no children; 77.9% of married teachers said their family life affected their professional life, compared to only 20.8% of single teachers (Figure 4.21). This is

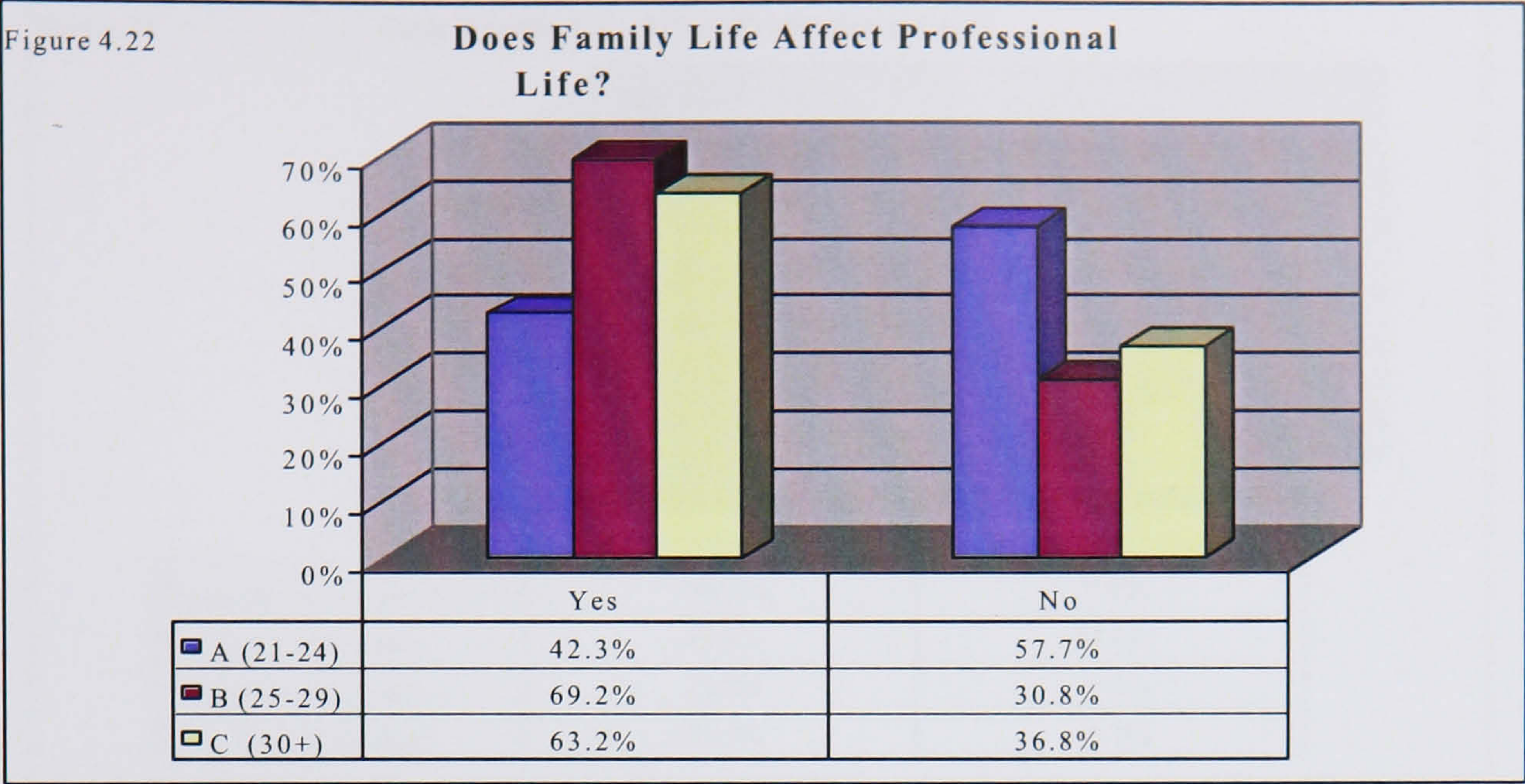
understandable – being married and having children adds a lot of responsibilities to a woman’s life and places many demands on time and effort. Importantly the type of intellectual resources she must devote to her growing children, especially as they develop personalities and reach school age, must be similar in kind to those resources needed pedagogically. Since no human has an infinite supply of such resources, it is reasonable to suppose that one set of responsibilities will always be tied to the other; that one will suffer if the other is demanding; that the stresses created by one will “infect” the other. My findings certainly suggest a very intimate and extensive relationship between familial and pedagogic responsibilities. Although in many ways Oman is a modern state, and women are employed in all sectors of the economy, nevertheless older concepts of female activity and responsibility do remain, and a strain between the two roles (domestic and professional) is bound to occur, perhaps more often than for their western counterparts, and with different implications.

Figure 4.21: Marital Status and Professional Life (N=166)



Older respondents were more likely to agree that their family life affected their professional life than younger respondents (Figure 4.22). The reason could be because that for them family meant marriage, since the variables of age and marital status are interrelated. It could also suggest that older respondents had more children, some of whom were in demanding age groups, and that this represented an economic as well as emotional pressure on the respondents.

Figure 4.22: Age Group and the Effect of Family on Professional Life (N=162)



The number of children, and their ages, impact on the effect of family on career. The greater the number of children, the more complex family life becomes, the more demands it is likely to make and the more the career is affected (Figure 4.23). Also, the younger the children, the more respondents perceived family life impacting on career (Figure 4.24). Clearly, young children are very demanding in terms of intellectual if not only physical resources, and “difficult” ages show the greatest effect on parents’ (especially mothers’) professional lives: for example, two year old children are noted for their awkwardness as personality and senses of identity conflict with the demands of the physical environment. (Miller, 1995 and Mitchell, 1988)

Figure 4.23: Number of Children and Effects on Professional Life (N=146)

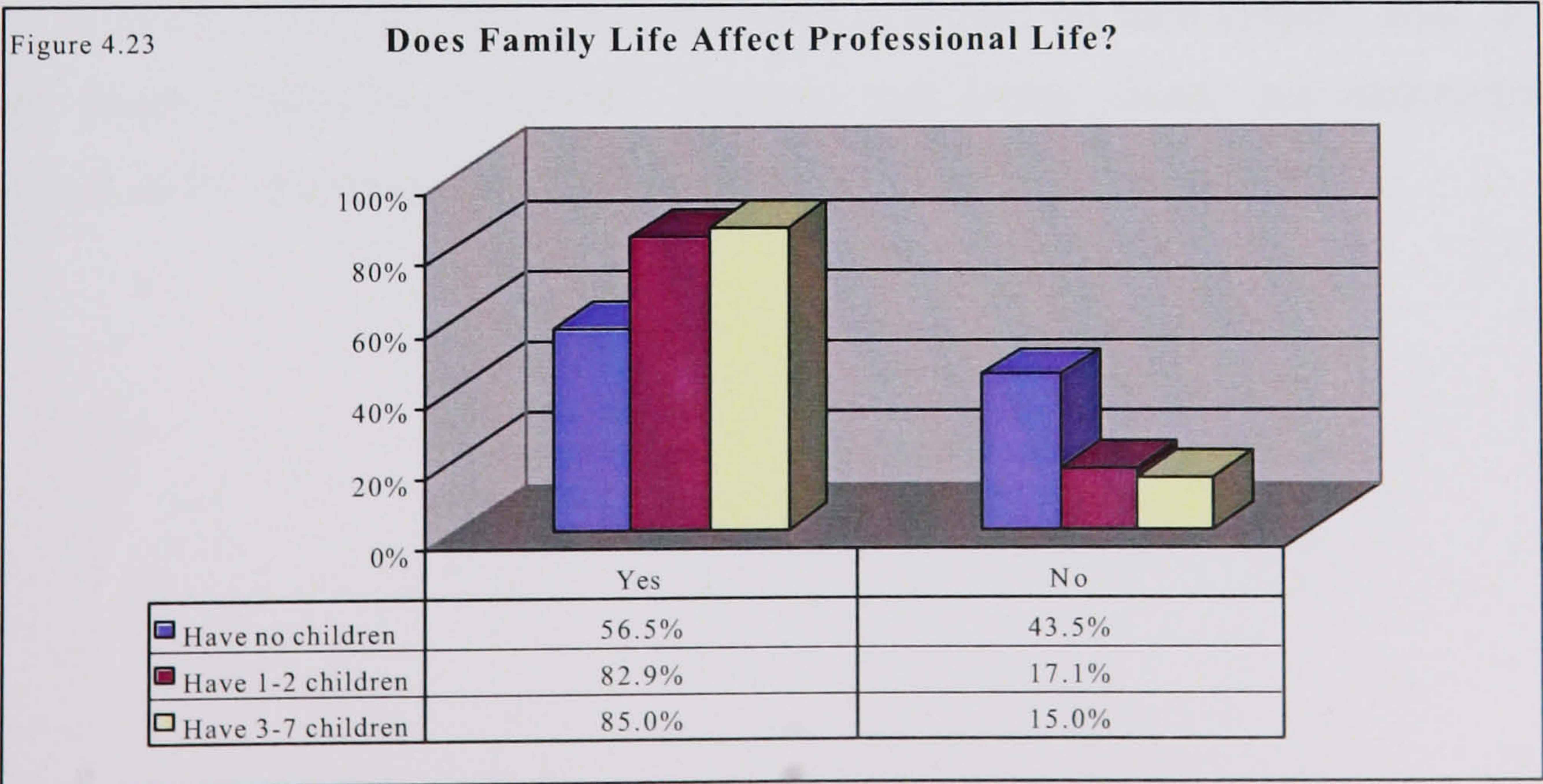
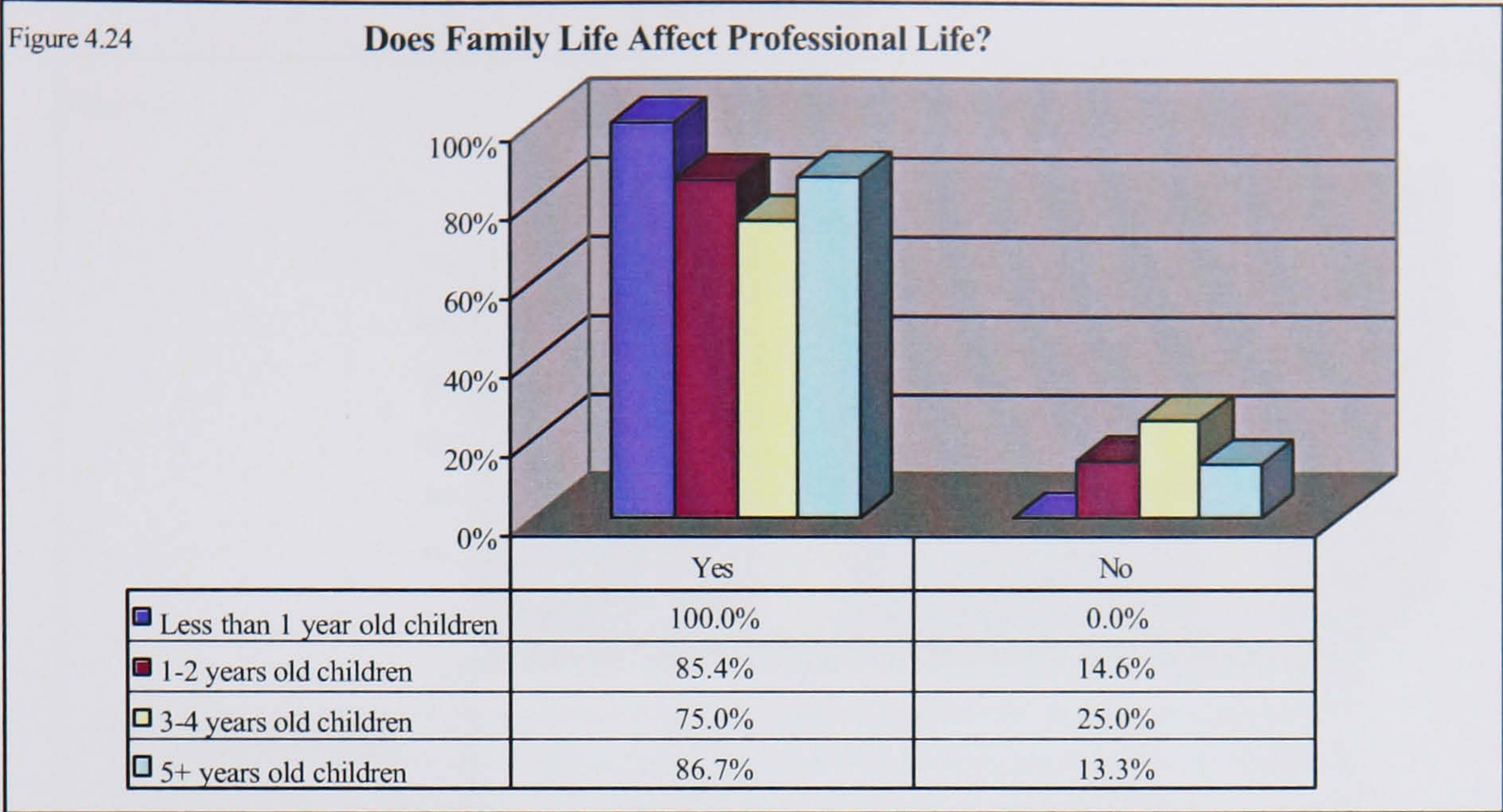


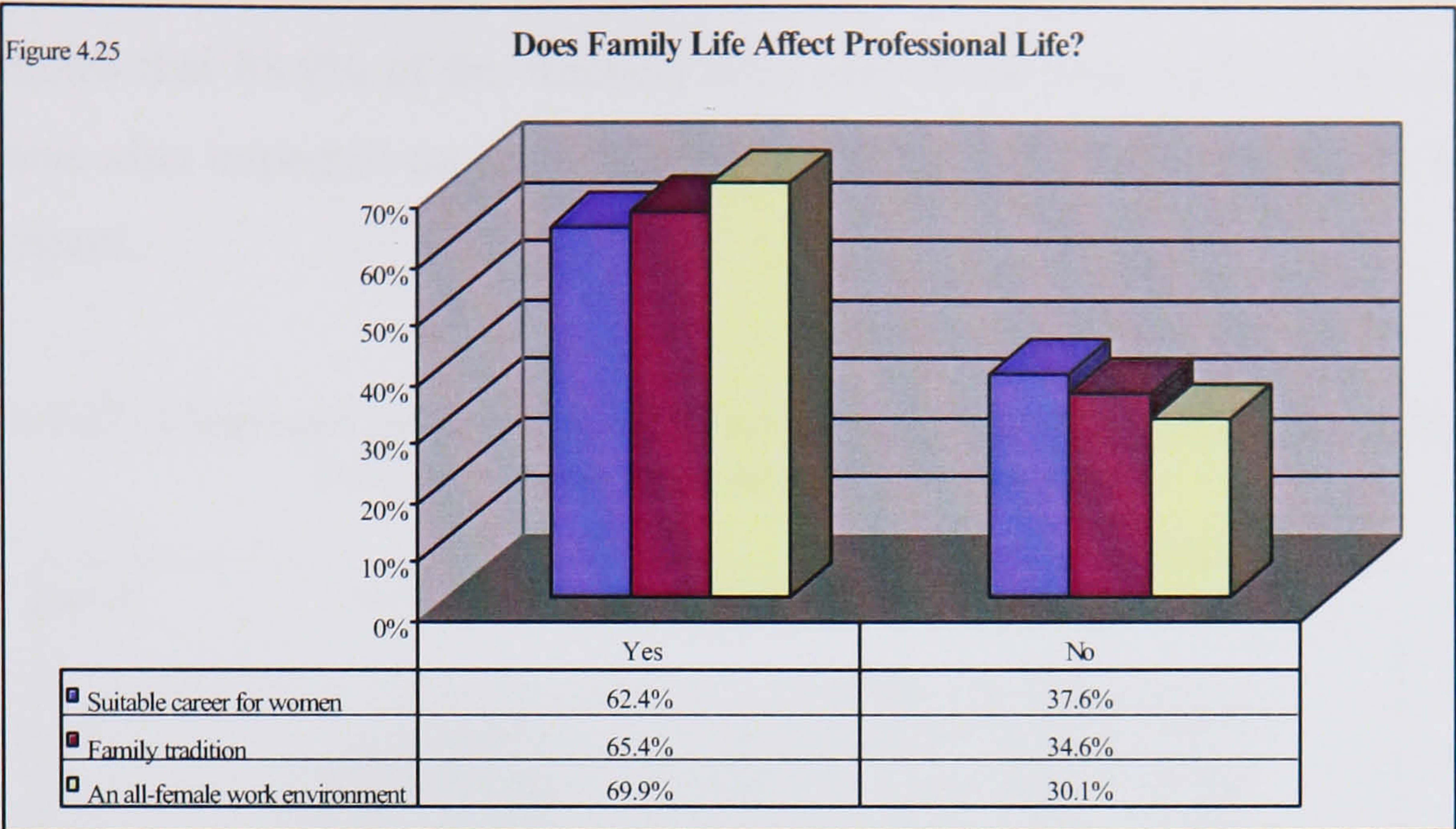
Figure 4.24: Children’s Ages and Effects on Professional Life (N=89)



Other variables were found to have a significant statistical association: the reasons for joining the profession; the reasons for remaining in it, and whether teachers saw their roles as wives and/or mothers taking precedence over their roles as teachers.

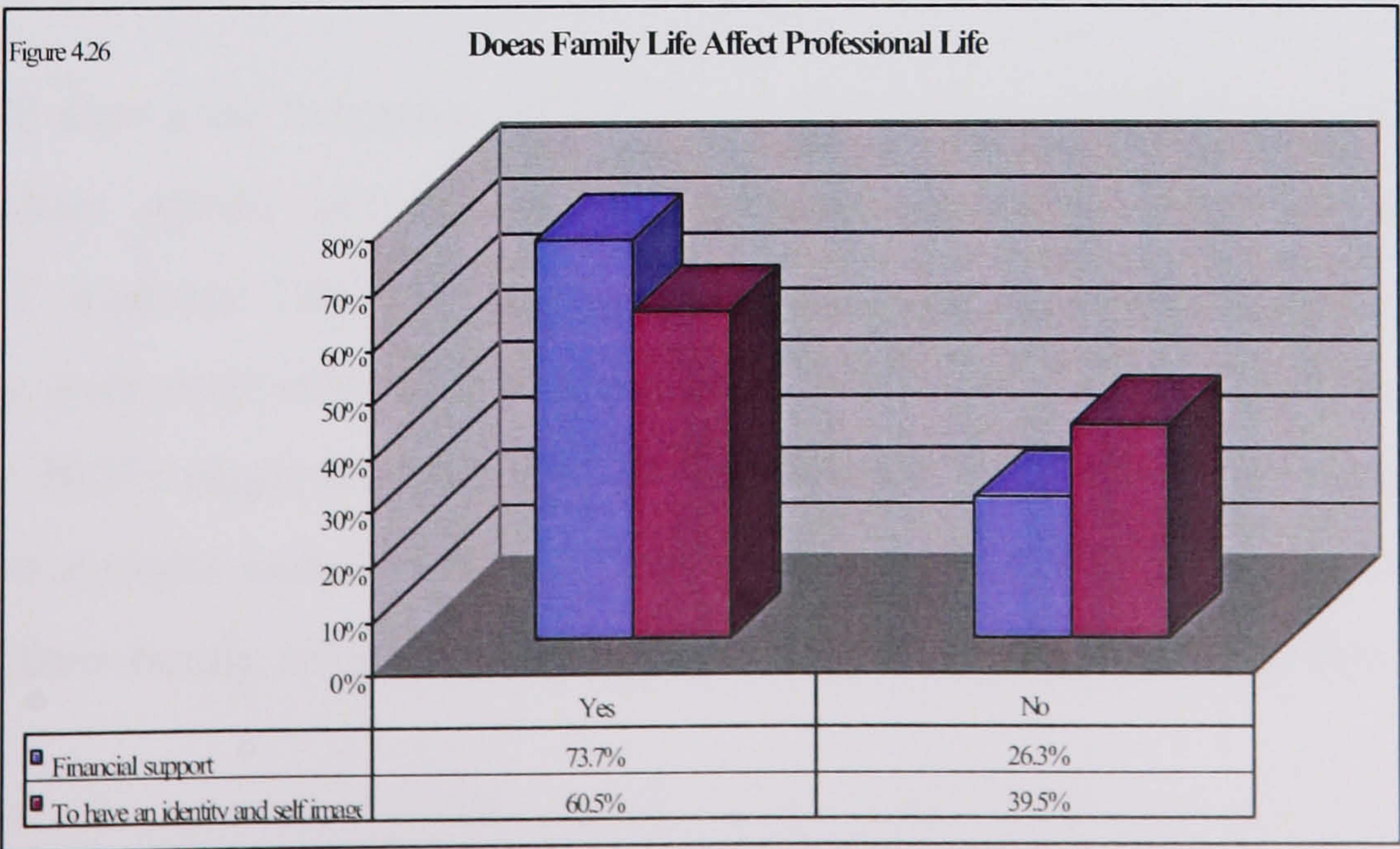
Reasons 4, 7 and 11 were found to be significantly related ($p < .05$) to whether teachers believed their domestic roles affected their professional ones. The majority who entered teaching (1) because of its suitability for women, because (2) teaching is a family tradition or because (3) teaching provides an all-female work environment, believed that their family roles affected their professional roles (Figure 4.25). This could be because these three reasons are culturally-determined, representing a common belief in Omani society that women’s main role is domestic. Therefore, women motivated by these reasons to teach, naturally *expect* familial roles to impact on their career. Also, it may be that these culturally-determined reasons, not being fixed, are vulnerable to ideological shifts, the threat (or reality) of which cause stress and anxiety.

Figure 4.25: Reasons to Teach and Perceptions of the Effect of Family on Professional Life (N=167)



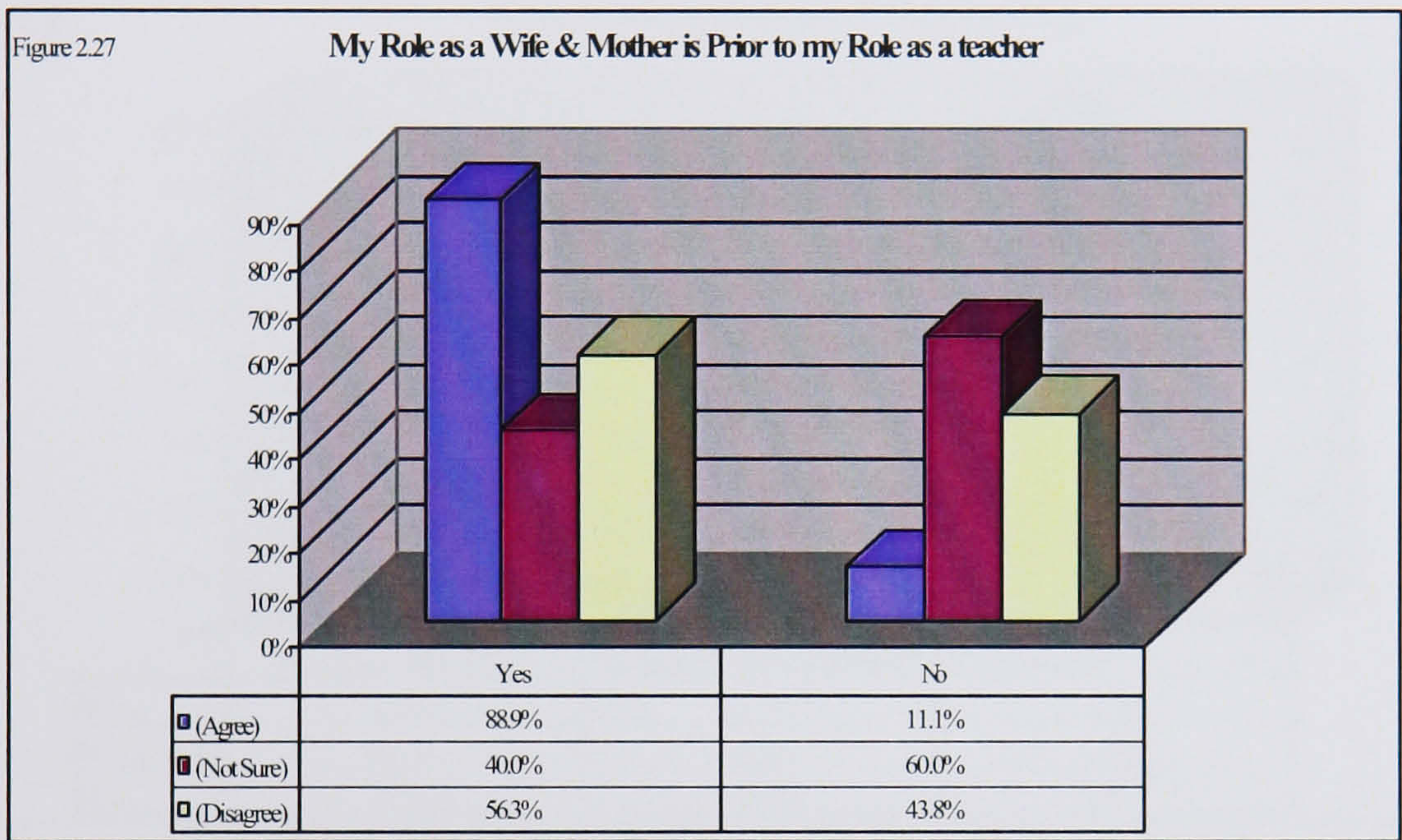
The reasons teachers had for remaining in their jobs was significantly related ($p < .05$) to whether they thought their personal lives impacted on their professional ones (see Figure 4.26). Reasons 2 – financial support, and 5 – to have an identity and self-image, were found to be strongly related. 73.7% of teachers who remained in teaching for financial support, believed their family lives had an impact on their careers; 26.3% did not. 60.5% of the teachers who remained in teaching as a means to personal identity and the maintenance of self image also believed their family lives had an impact on their professional lives. Teaching might be a way to establish individual identities, separate and distinct from those of wives and/or mothers, but these two types of identity may well not be able to coexist harmoniously.

Figure 4.26: Reasons to Remain in Teaching and Effect of Family on Professional Life (N=167)



Finally, how important a teacher considers her domestic roles is found to be highly associated ($p < .01$) with whether her personal life affects her professional one. Figure 4.27 illustrates that 88.9% of the teachers who considered their family roles a priority believe these also impacted on their careers, whereas 11.1% believed family roles had no such impact.

Figure 4.27: Counter-Consideration of Familial and Pedagogic Roles, and whether Family Affects Professional Life (N=166)



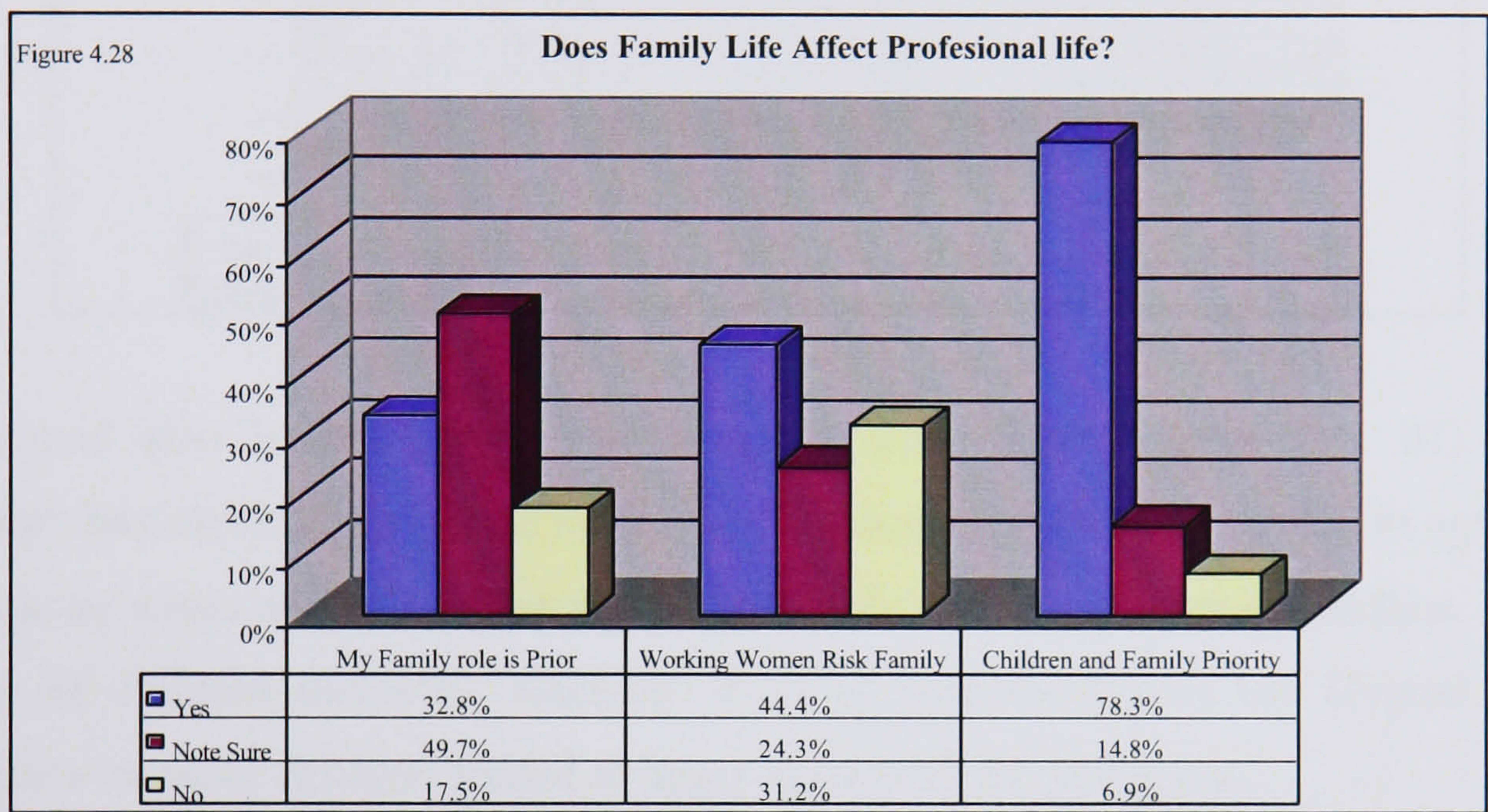
Three further items, in the form of agree/disagree statements, explored the respondents' perception of familial and professional roles. The respondents were asked to state, on a Likert-type scale from 1-5, their level of agreement with the following statements:

- 1) I view my role as a wife and/or mother as taking precedence over my role as a teacher;
- 2) I believe that working women often risk the stability of their family life; and
- 3) Children and family life should be the first priority in any woman's life.

Figure 4.28 shows the frequency of responses. The majority of both married as well as single teachers agreed with the second and third statements. However, a significant number of teachers (49.7%) felt unsure about whether their family roles took precedence over their roles as teachers - the first statement. This could be a result of having the 36.8% single teachers who would naturally feel that, for the moment, family life was not a major consideration. It could also indicate the respondents' reluctance to admit that their family roles are more significant to them than teaching. This reflects the

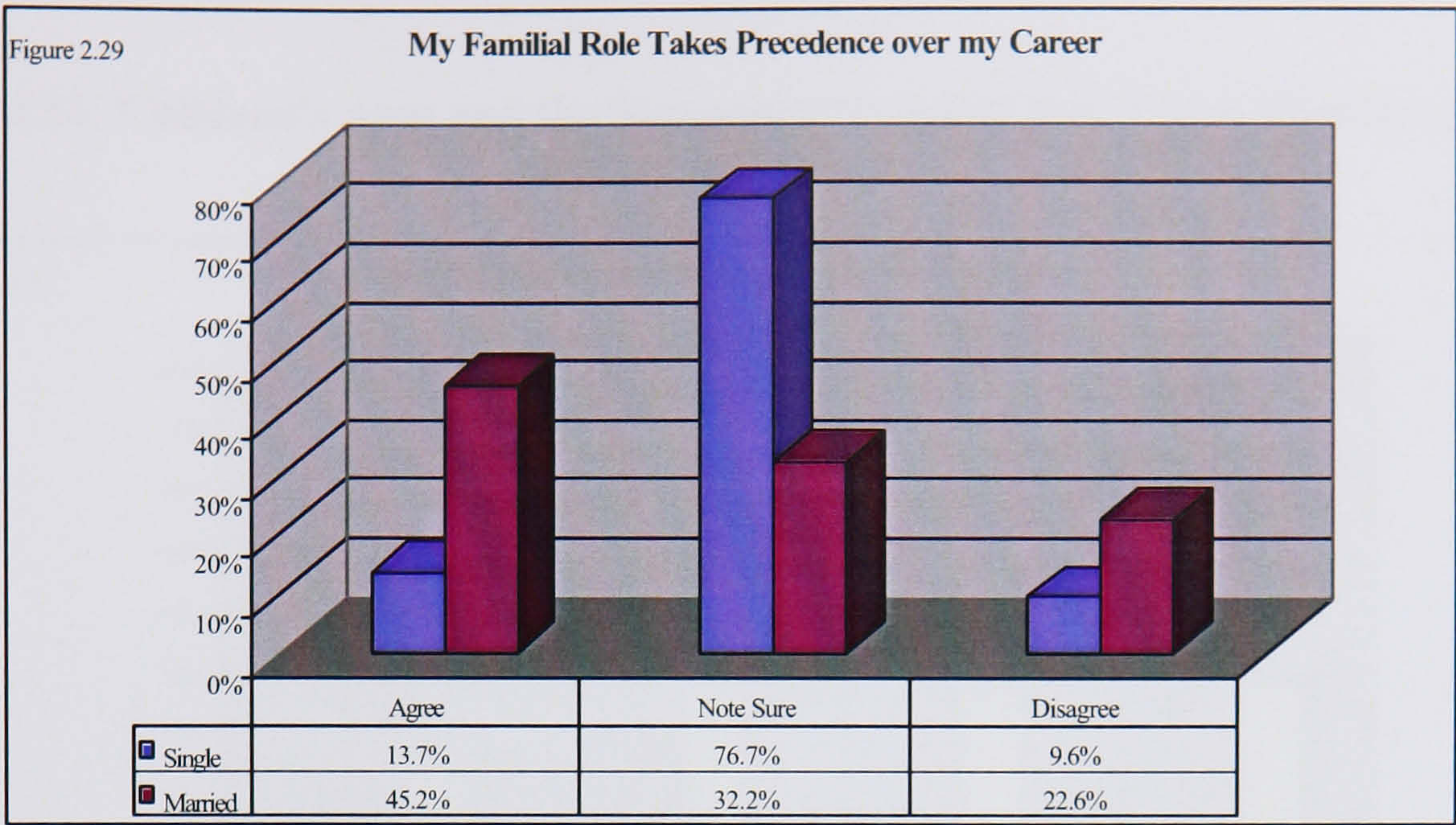
conflict between family responsibilities and professional development. Society is changing and professional women are increasingly being recognised, which may also generate a sense of guilt among those women, who feel the conflict between the two identities. It is clear that respondents’ identities were being defined in very complex ways: ways not always easily quantifiable in research, but only suggested by results.

Figure 4.28: Frequencies of Agreement/Disagreement with Statements about Familial Roles (N=189)



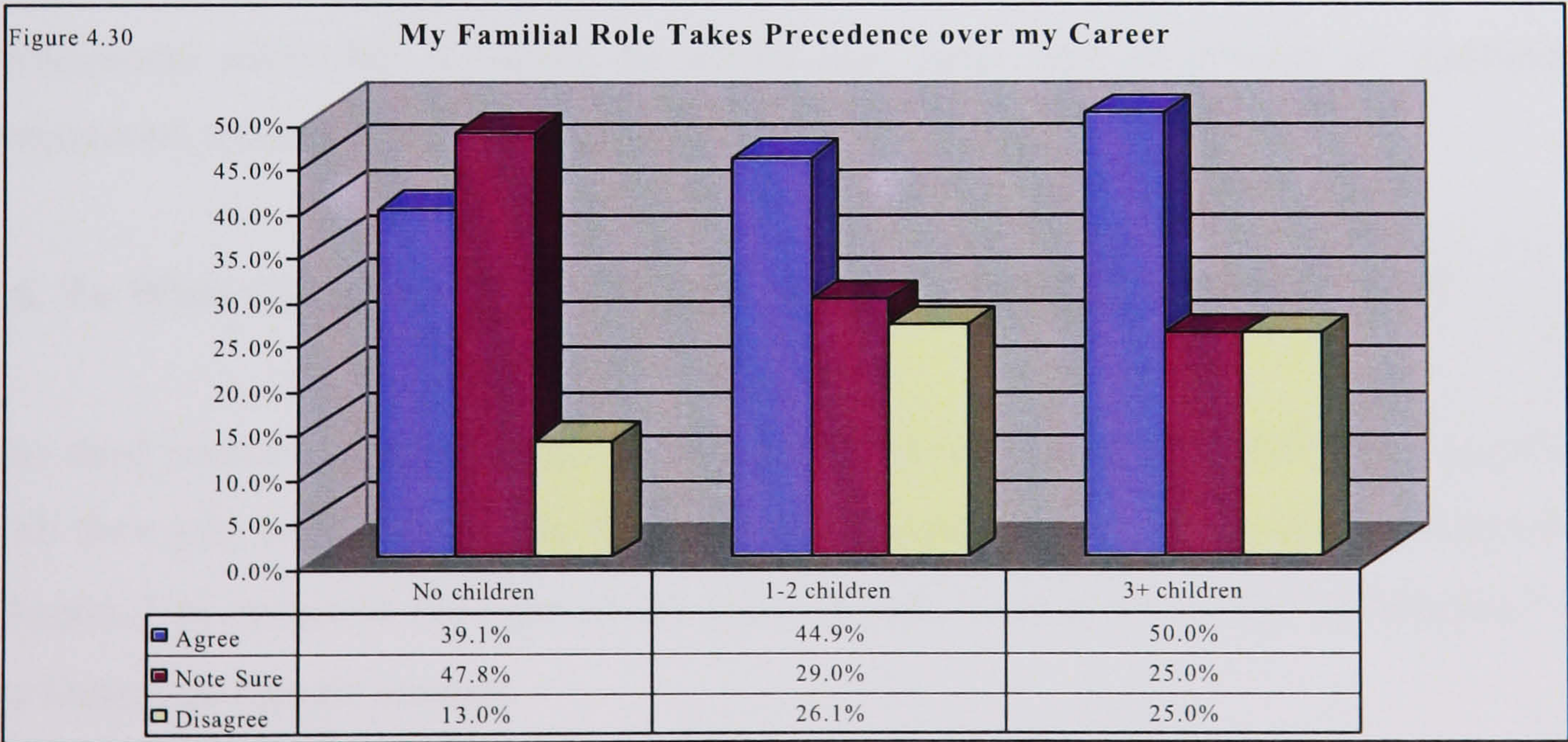
I found that the respondents’ age groups, teaching experiences, their reasons for joining teaching, and whether they considered leaving or reasons for remaining, were unrelated. However, there was a significant association found between marital status and motherhood and some of these variables. Marital status was found to be related significantly to the first statement ($p < .01$). Many married teachers (45.2%) tended to agree with the statement “My familial role takes precedence over my career”, while a majority of single teachers were unsure (76.7%) (Figure 4.29). This may be predictable: single teachers have not yet experienced the tensions that can result from having domestic *and* professional responsibilities. They tended to feel uncertain whether such tensions would show themselves in the future. It is interesting that only 9.6% of single teachers disagreed with the statement, compared to 22.6% of the married teachers, suggesting that if there is a shift occasioned by a change in marital status, it may not simply be towards reordering priorities in favour of family. Again, there is clearly a tension between social and personal expectations, and the results may not always be predictable or conservative.

Figure 4.29: Marital Status and the Statement “My Familial Role Takes Precedence over my Career” (N=188)



Motherhood also is distinguished as a significantly related factor ($p < .01$) to the statement: having children affects priorities. Teachers with children tended to agree that their role as wives and/or mothers takes precedence over their roles as teachers. As the number of children increases, teachers’ level of agreement rises too (Figure 4.30). Teachers with more children tended to agree more with the statement.

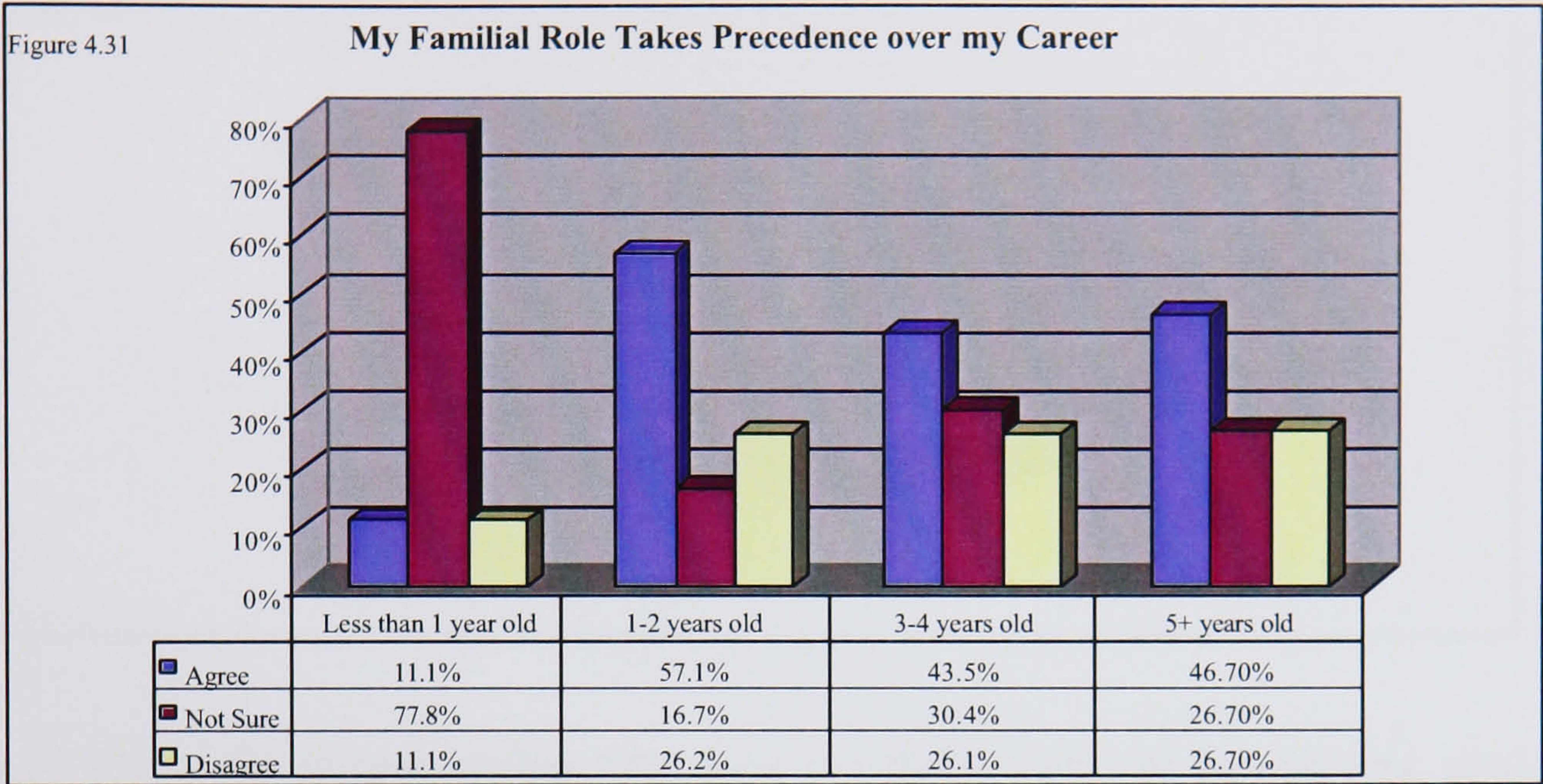
Figure 4.30: Number of Children and the Statement “Familial Role Takes Precedence over my Career” (N=188)



Children’s ages were found to be another significant factor ($p < .01$) in teachers’ agreement with the statement. Teachers tended to agree with the statement as their children grew (Figure 4.31). Children need more attention as they grow up. More

responsibilities are added especially when they start school and/or if they have other siblings who, too, need a lot of care.

Figure 4.31: Children’s Ages and the Statement “Familial Role Takes Precedence over my Career” (N=89)



The findings of this section clearly indicate the continuing central position of the family in Omani society, though the professionalism of women is recognized more and there appear to be stresses created by the impact of the divergence between social and personal expectations. Widespread social beliefs regarding women’s roles still have an influence on the way Omani women percieve the relationship of their familial and professional roles, but it should be added that some type of erosion of traditional perceptions appears to be taking place.

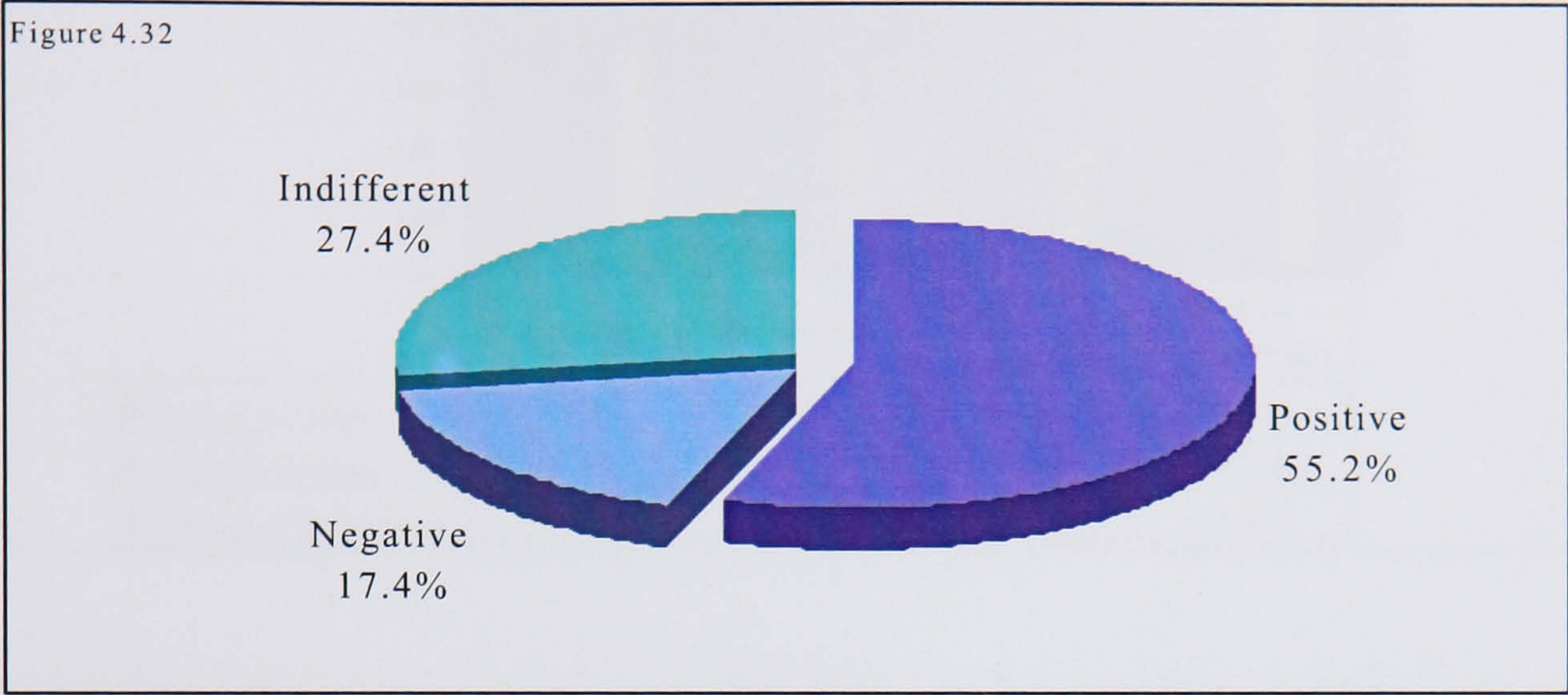
4.6. To What Extent are Omani Women Teachers Satisfied with their Jobs?

The third research question aimed to determine whether Omani teachers were satisfied with their job, and what exactly the sources and determinents of satisfaction might be. Chapter 7 examines in the light of the research data what is meant by “satisfaction” in the Omani pedagogic context.

Presented with five different diagrams (see appendices 7 and 8), and asked to choose the one that best described their general feelings about being a teacher, the majority of respondents (55.2%) had mostly positive attitudes to their jobs, while 17.4% had mostly

negative feelings, and a further 27.4% expressed an equal percentage of positive and negative feelings, or were indifferent about a pedagogic career (see Figure 4.32).

Figure 4.32: The Sample’s Attitudes to Teaching (N=190)

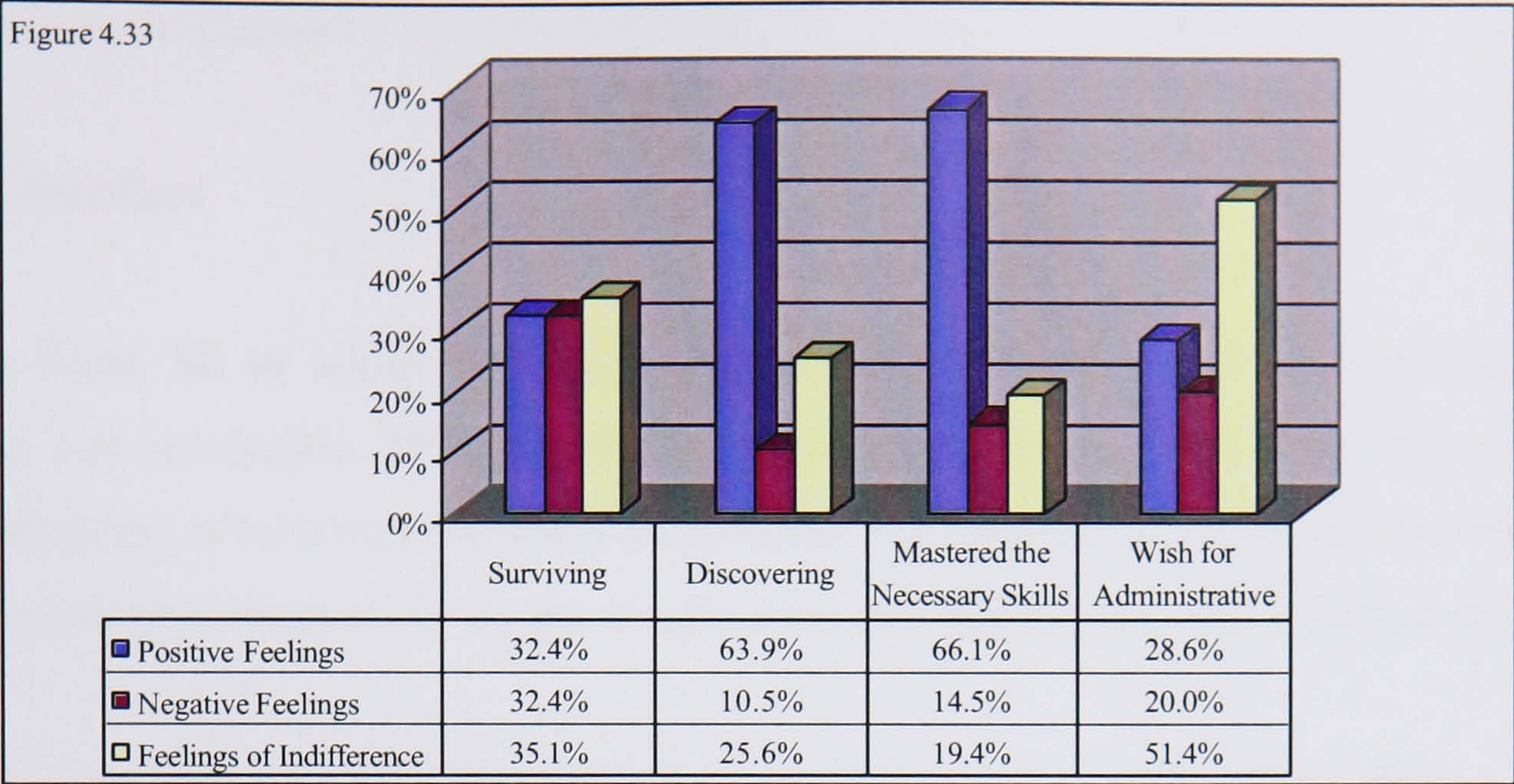


With 55.2% of the sample saying they were generally happy to be teachers, could this be taken to mean they were generally satisfied with their jobs? The interviews examined in chapter 7 reveal the subtle but powerful difference between comfort and satisfaction.

Analysis of relationships between different factors, and how respondents felt towards their jobs, revealed a lack of any obvious association between teachers’ age groups, marital status, motherhood or their current feelings about their careers. Nevertheless, a statistically significant relationship ($p < .01$) was found between their feelings about their careers, the reasons they remained in teaching, and how they perceived their current situations.

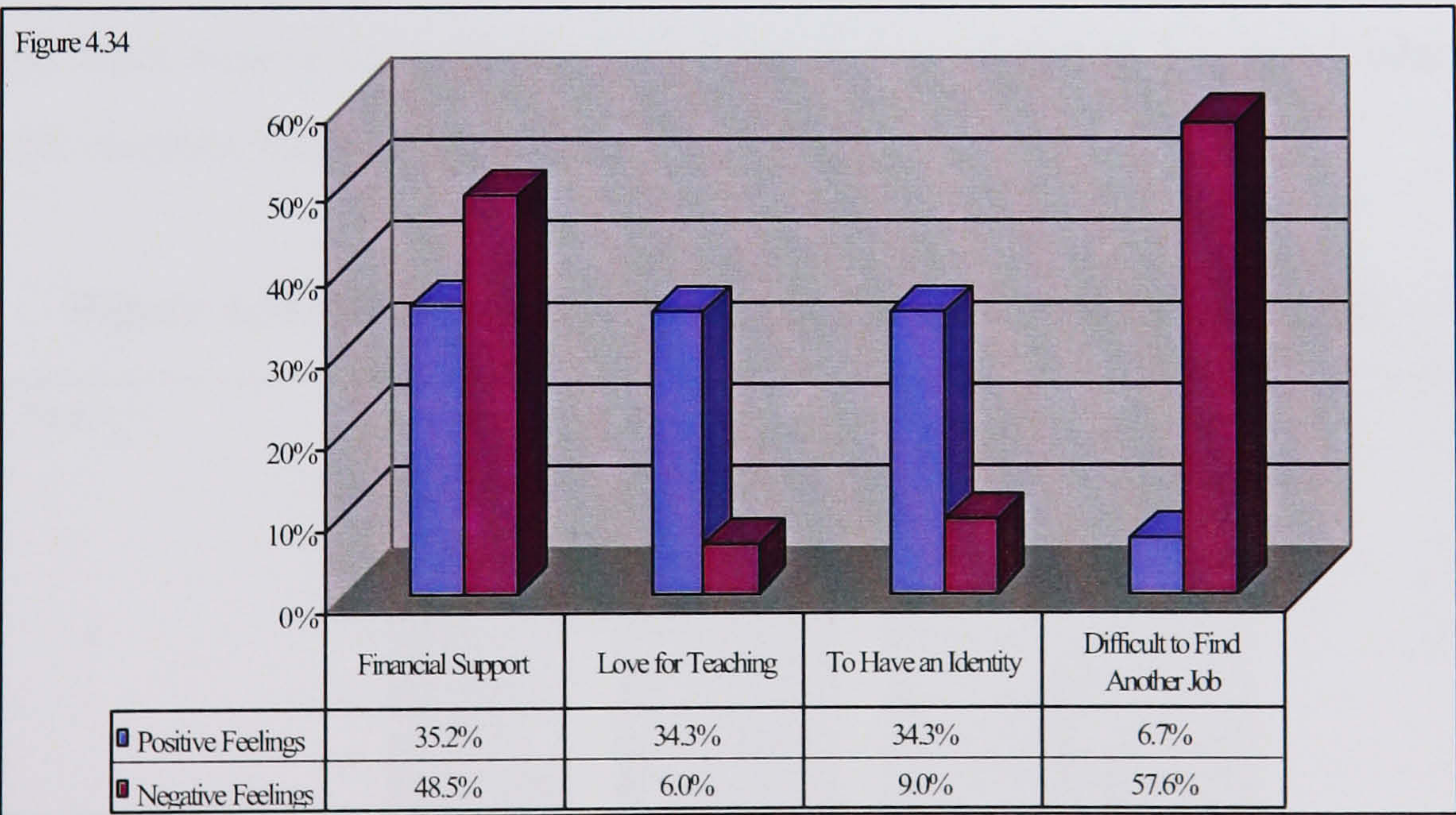
Figure 4.33 shows a significant relationship ($p < .01$) between how subjects describe their situation as teachers and how they feel towards teaching. Teachers who see themselves as “surviving”, or who wish to shift to an administrative post, feel indifferent about their pedagogy. Teachers who simply saw themselves as “surviving” had the most negative feelings towards teaching (Figure 4.33). Those who wished for an administrative post were ready for a career change. On the other hand, teachers who were in the “discovering” phase, or felt they had mastered the necessary teaching skills, had mostly positive feelings about their careers.

Figure 4.33: Feelings about Teaching and a Teacher’s Current Situation (N=190)



How a teacher feels about her job was also found to be significantly related to why she stayed in it. Subjects who felt positive about teaching tended to remain, more for intrinsic reasons such as a love of pedagogy, and to establish an identity. Subjects with negative feelings tended to stay for reasons such as salary, or because they could not find an alternative (Figure 4.34)

Figure 4.34: Feeling about Teaching and Reasons for Remaining in the Job (N=190)



4.7. What are the Sources of Omani Teachers’ Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction with their Career?

4.7.1. Satisfiers

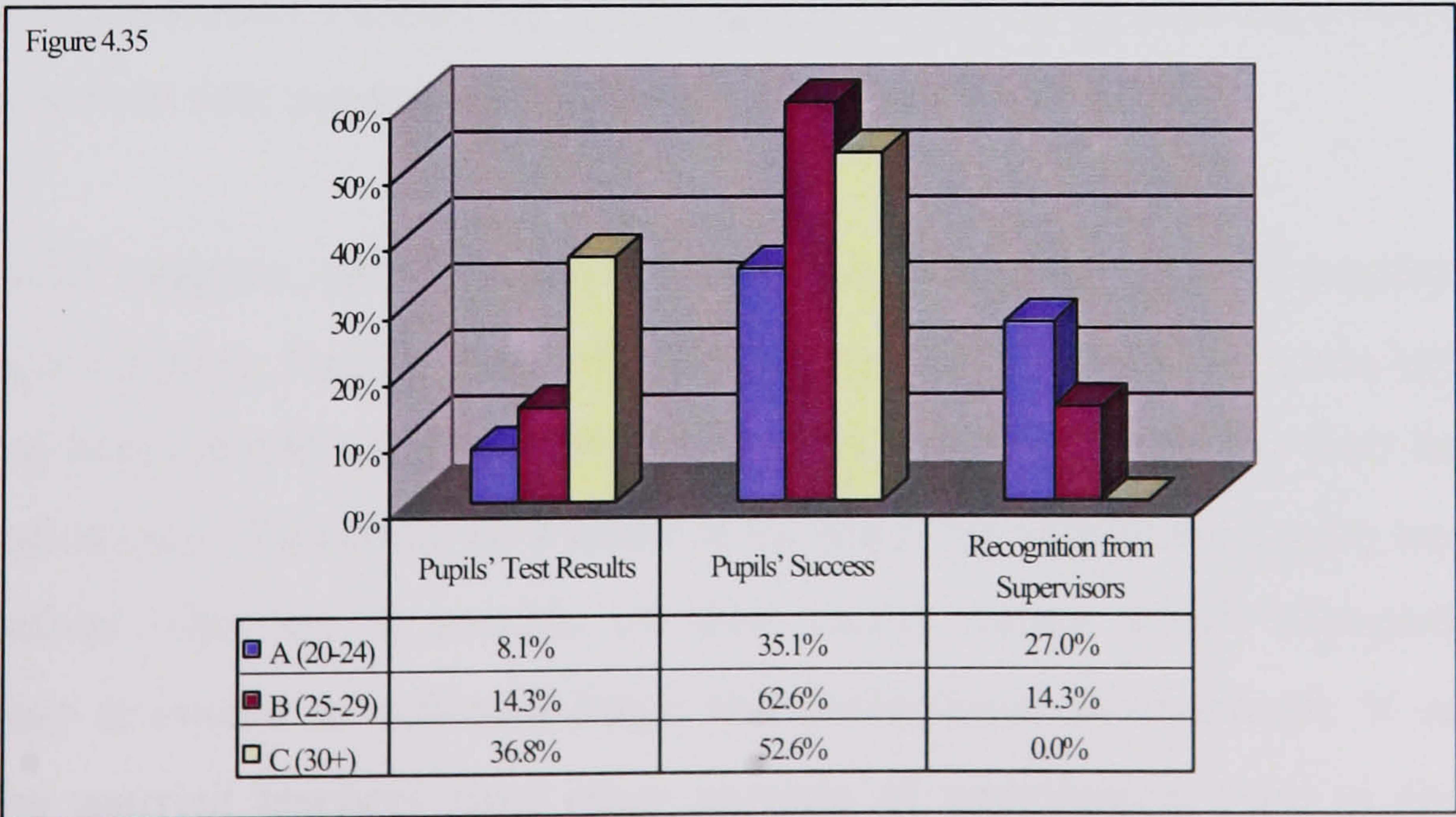
Three items, all of which were in a multiple choice format, dealt with the issue of teacher job satisfaction. The first asked respondents to choose from a list three reasons for pedagogic satisfaction; they were also given the freedom to add other reasons. The most common responses across the sample were that satisfaction was achieved when:

- A. “you feel your pupils understood what you were trying to explain” (58.4%)
- B. “you see your pupils’ success” (49.5%)
- C. “you experience good relationships with your colleagues” (38.9%)

The second most common reason for satisfaction among trainees was, perhaps predictably, when “your efforts are recognized by university supervisors” (45.5%).

Analysis revealed a significant relationship ($p < .05$) between respondents’ ages and marital status, and their reasons for feeling job satisfaction. Age group was found to be related to satisfiers number 2 – pupils’ test results, 3 – pupils’ success, and 8 – recognition from supervisors; while marital status was related to 1 – good salary and 8. Figure 4.35 clarifies these relationships.

Figure 4.35: Respondents’ Age Groups and Job Satisfiers (N=184)



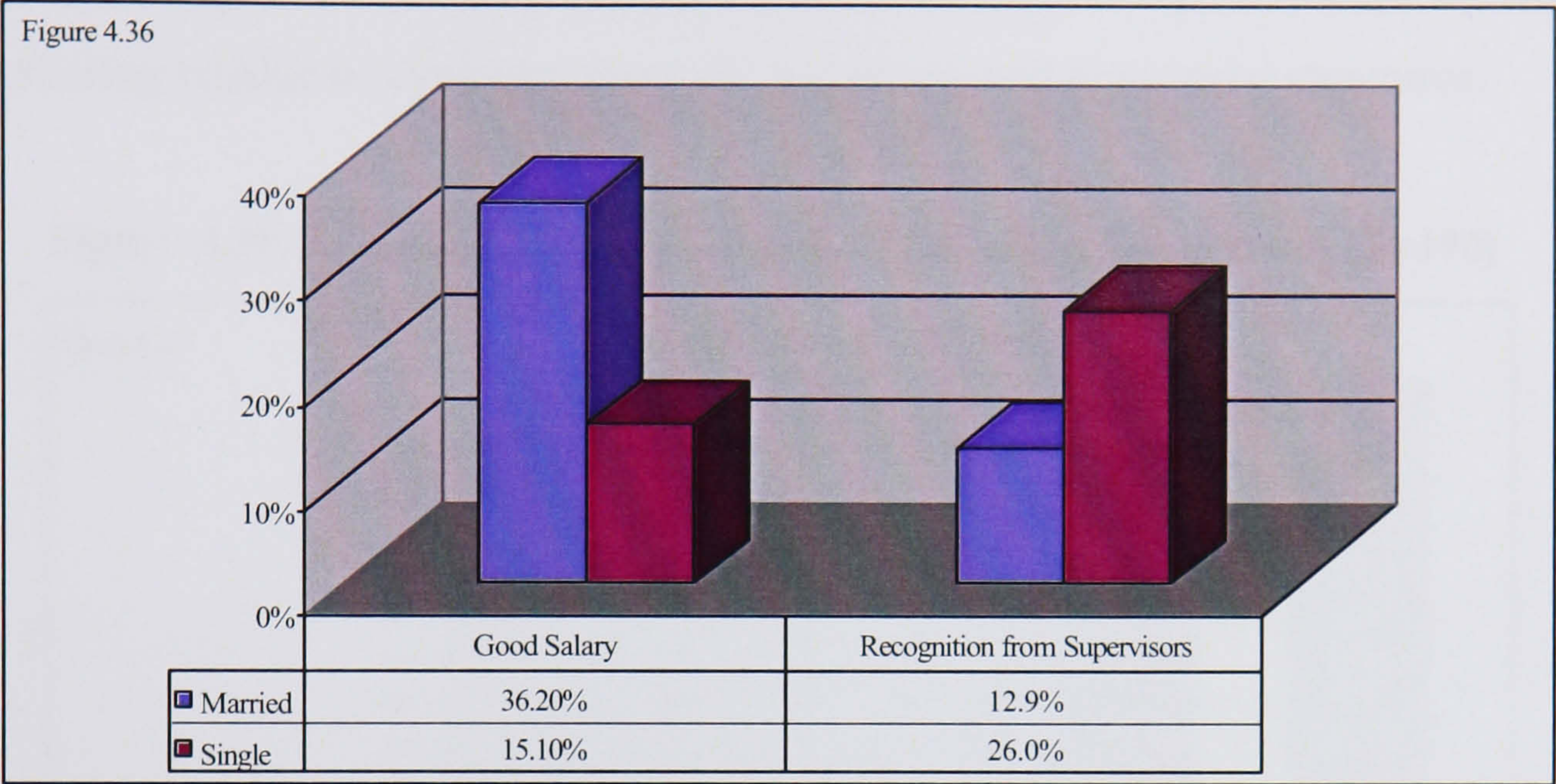
Pupils' test results tended to be more important to the oldest, more experienced teachers. Although one would expect inexperienced teachers to be more concerned with their pupils' test results because this is an easy mode of measurement and identification, it was not the case here. Reliance on tests, which simply fit students into a map of pedagogy, which in turn is systematically determined, may be more often used by inexperienced teachers, those teachers with fewer resources, or with less stamina. Teachers in group B (Figure 4.35) seemed to have more satisfaction from seeing their pupils' success, whereas the younger respondents in group A were more satisfied in having efforts recognised by their supervisors (see 5.2.1.2.4 and 5.2.2.3) – more than the other two groups. This may be because most are training or within their formative pedagogic years when recognition is the simplest (and most pleasurable) way to measure achievement, and in creating confidence and development. Interestingly, none of the eldest age range was interested in such approbation; perhaps by this stage teachers are more cynical, and this would be directed most at the efficacy and efficiency of hierarchies – seeking approbation from those who might well be the source of much pedagogic misery would be unlikely and perverse.

Hardly anybody chose parents' cooperation as a satisfier. This could indicate the insignificant role parents play in their children's academic process in Oman – or perhaps the way parents may be excluded by pedagogic professionals; the centralised system of government schools is characterised by a lack of parental involvement. Parental input is not sought: issues are decided directly, without consultation, by the Ministry of Education. Parents are mostly involved only on an individual basis, perhaps when their child fails academically.

Figure 4.36, suggests salary provides married teachers with more satisfaction than it does single teachers. Family responsibilities are probably the main reasons behind this. Single teachers seem to get more satisfaction from being recognised by their supervisors than married ones. This could be a result of having more singles among the trainees and new teachers who are at periods of their career during which recognition from supervisors is crucial to self-confidence and professional development. It could also mean that married teachers have other avenues of approbation, such as children or

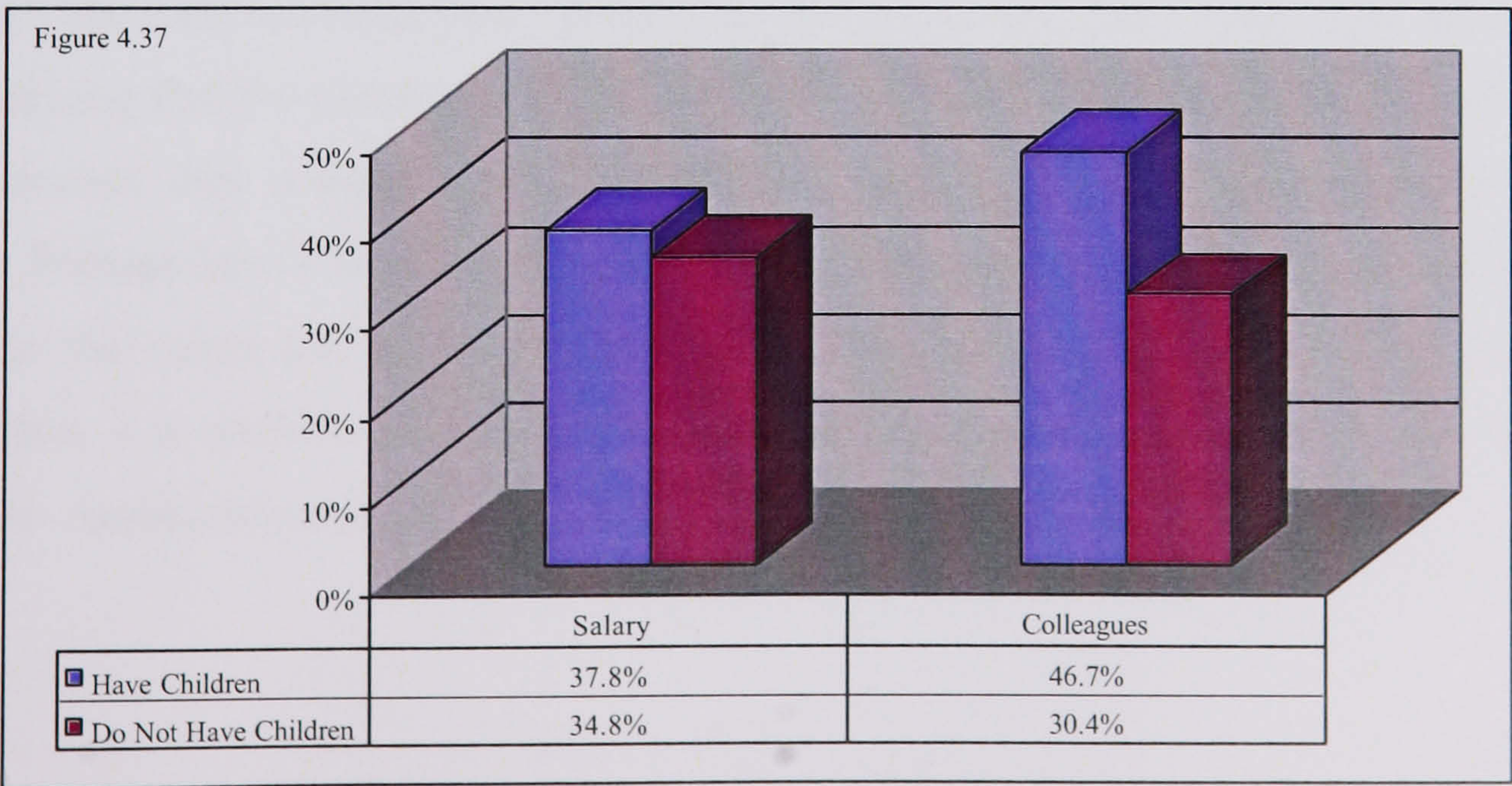
spouses, whereas single teachers are more isolated, and thus find approbation mainly or only from colleagues, superiors or pupils.

Figure 4.36: Respondents’ Marital Status and Job Satisfiers (N=189)



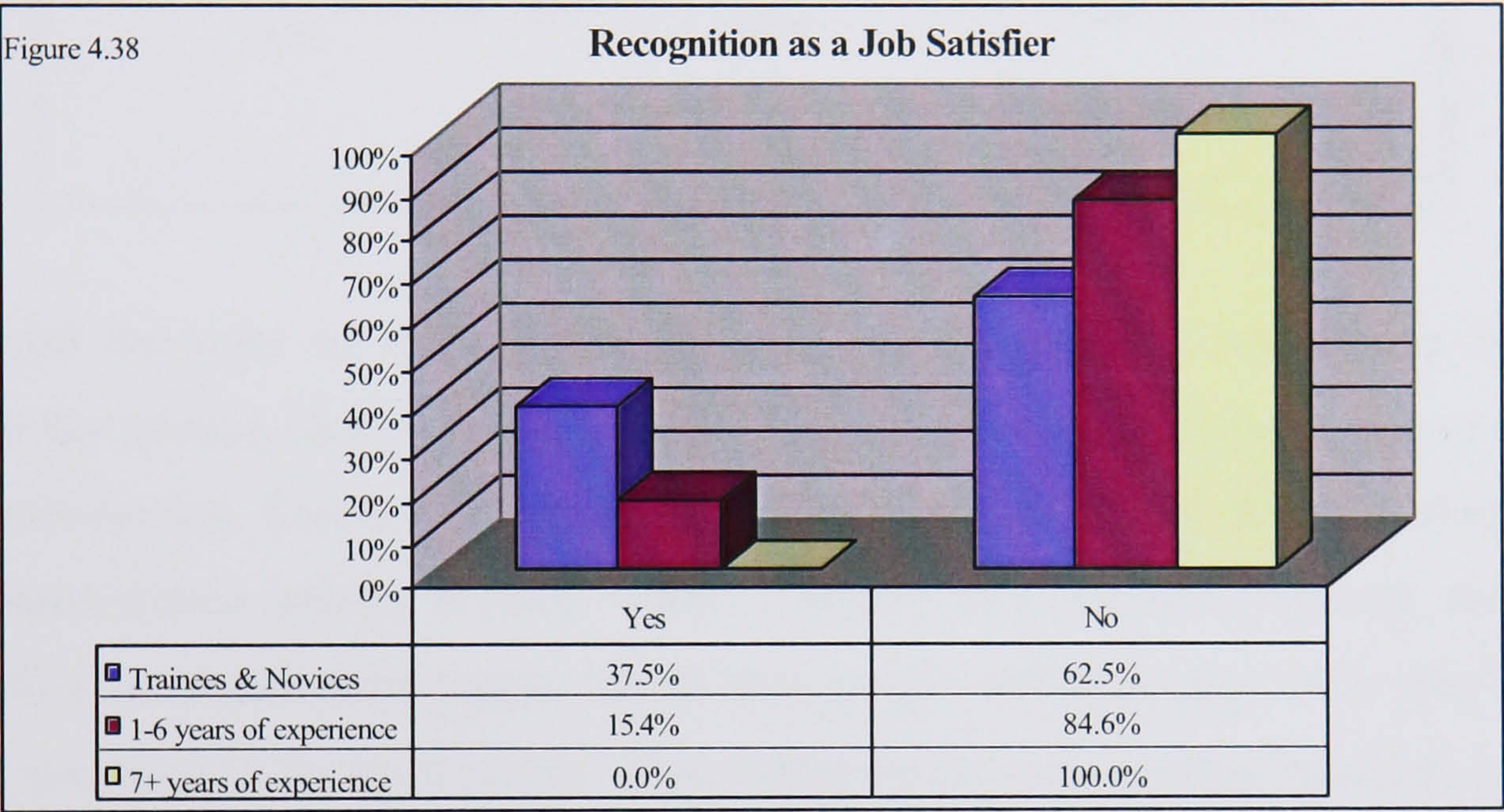
Having children was found to be moderately related ($p < .05$) to two sources of teacher career satisfaction: salary and good relations with colleagues. 37.4% and 46.2% of married teachers with children said that salary and good relations with colleagues were two of the main sources of job satisfaction, compared to 32% and 28% of childless married teachers (Figure 4.37).

Figure 4.37: Respondents’ Parental Status and Job Satisfiers (N=113)



Teaching experience was significantly related ($p < .01$) to satisfier 8 – recognition of efforts by inspectors. Maybe, as teachers gain more experience, they tend to experience less satisfaction from having their effort recognised. Figure 4.38 shows that, as teachers gain experience, they attach less importance to this particular satisfier. This could be due to increasing levels of self-confidence gained with experience, or indeed because of an increasing residue of cynicism about the pedagogic and ministerial structures.

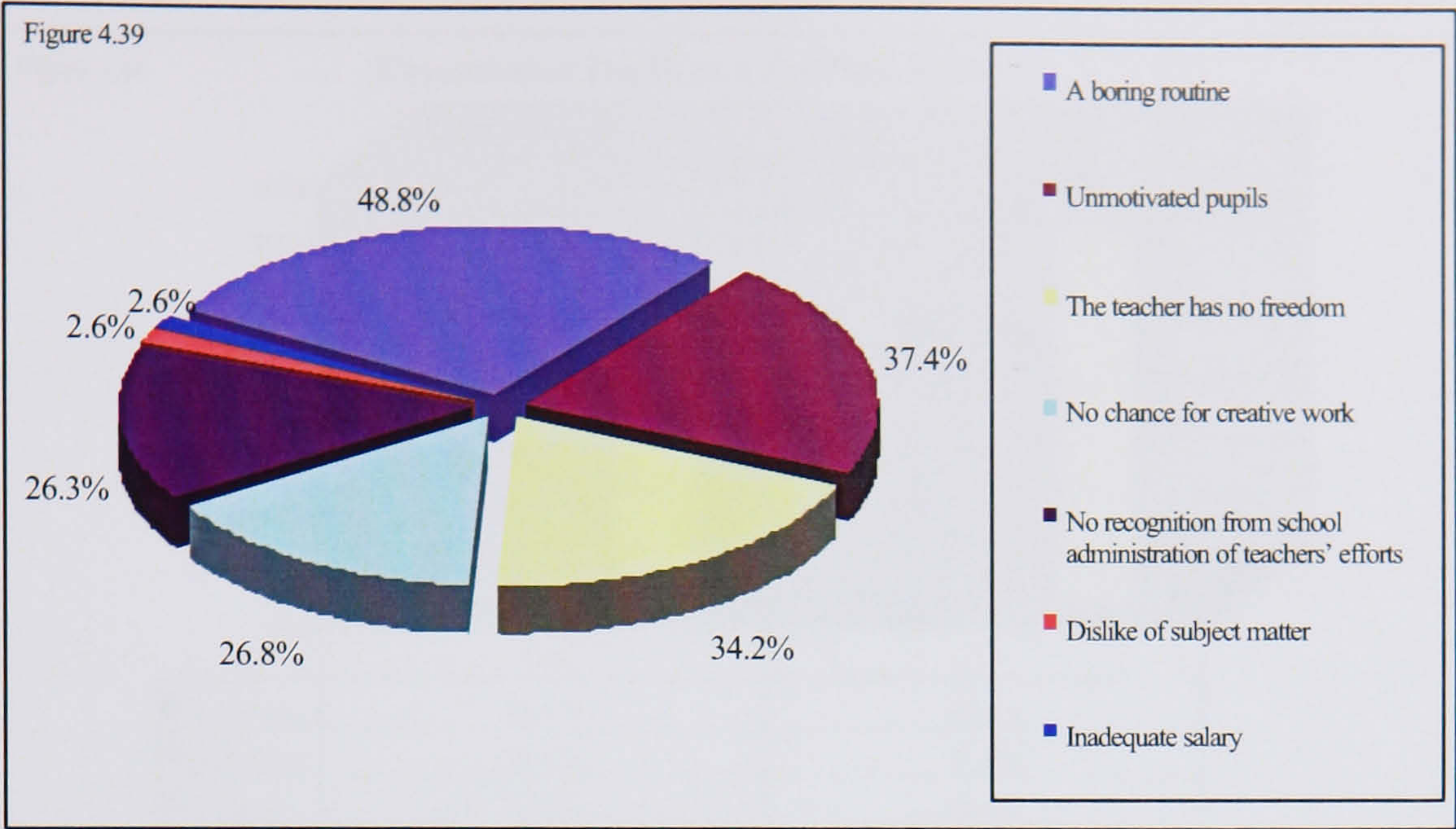
Figure 4.38: Teaching Experience and Recognition by Supervisors (N=190)



4.7.2. Dissatisfiers

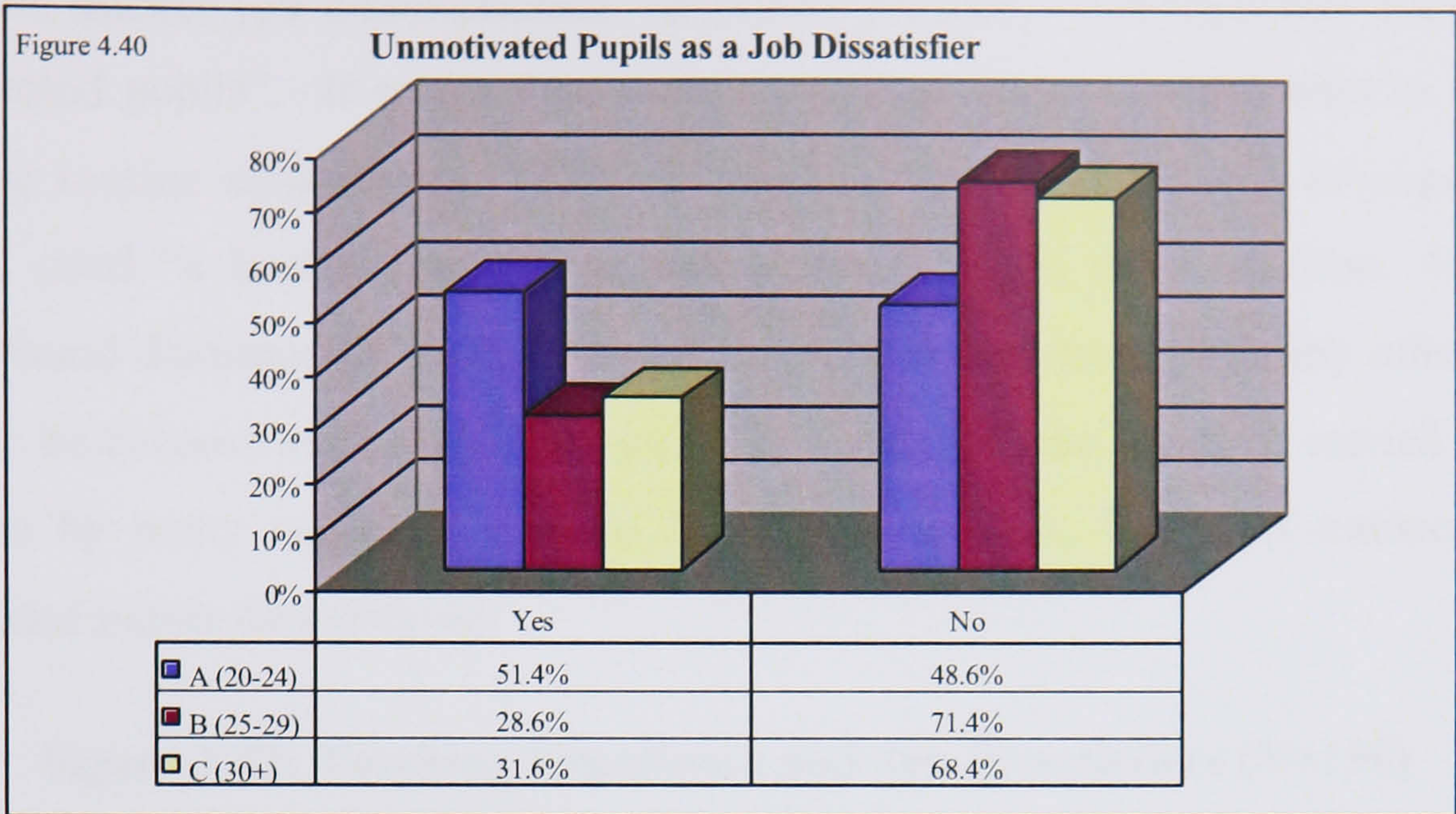
Respondents were asked to choose up to three sources for lack of career satisfaction. The most common “dissatisfiers” were “a boring routine” followed by “unmotivated pupils”; the least common were “dislike for subject matter” and “inadequate salary”. It is surprising that the percentage is so low for “inadequate salary”: if salary is important to a teacher, then a higher salary should be a factor to increase satisfaction in most cases. Perhaps here I have not thoroughly identified the nature of that importance – it may be that salary has an initial, ideologically binding quality, which is perceived as important: it is symbolic of recognition of professionalism that is, in itself, important for women. Amelioration of the salary would therefore be relatively unimportant.

Figure 4.39: Frequencies of Dissatisfiers (N=190)



I analyzed the roles of the different factors, and a significant relationship is clear between age groups, marital statuses, motherhood and other experiences, and sources of job dissatisfaction. Teachers' ages are particularly associated ($p < .05$) with dissatisfier 12 – unmotivated pupils (Figure 4.40). I found that younger teachers are more dissatisfied by unmotivated pupils, but as they mature and gain experience they tend to be less dissatisfied by such pupils. This could be because younger teachers are less experienced: age and experience are interrelated factors. Young, inexperienced teachers are also usually more idealistic. They expect more excitement from, and interaction with their pupils, and might take pupils' reluctance to interact as a sign of their own pedagogic failure. Personal psychological extremes may more often be associated with those who have fewer pedagogic resources, or are less likely to be objective. As teachers gain experience they get better at dealing with pupils, including unmotivated ones. The results could also suggest that, with experience, teachers get less annoyed with unmotivated pupils; they might get used to the omnipresence of this type of pupil, or simply become less affected by the classroom situation in general. Disassociation must be a factor in any long-term vocational career, as a way of easing emotional stresses.

Figure 4.40: Respondents' Age Group and Unmotivated Pupils (N=184)



Marital status was also found to be significantly associated ($p < .05$) with sources of dissatisfaction: number 4 – a boring routine, and 10 – no chance for inventive or creative work. 54.3% of married teachers found teaching routine “boring” compared to 39.7% of their single colleagues. 35.6% of single teachers found their inability to be pedagogically creative unsatisfying, compared to 20.7% of their married colleagues. This could indicate a tendency for married teachers to work according to a routine, while single teachers, because they have more time in the absence of similar domestic responsibilities, invest more time and effort in their work. Therefore, the need to be creative is greater – Figure 4.41. Importantly, respondents’ age groups, marital statuses and teaching experiences are highly interrelated factors. At this stage, caution may be advisable: marital status might not be as important a factor in dissatisfaction as it appears.

Figure 4.41: Respondents' Marital Status and Job Dissatisfiers (N=189)

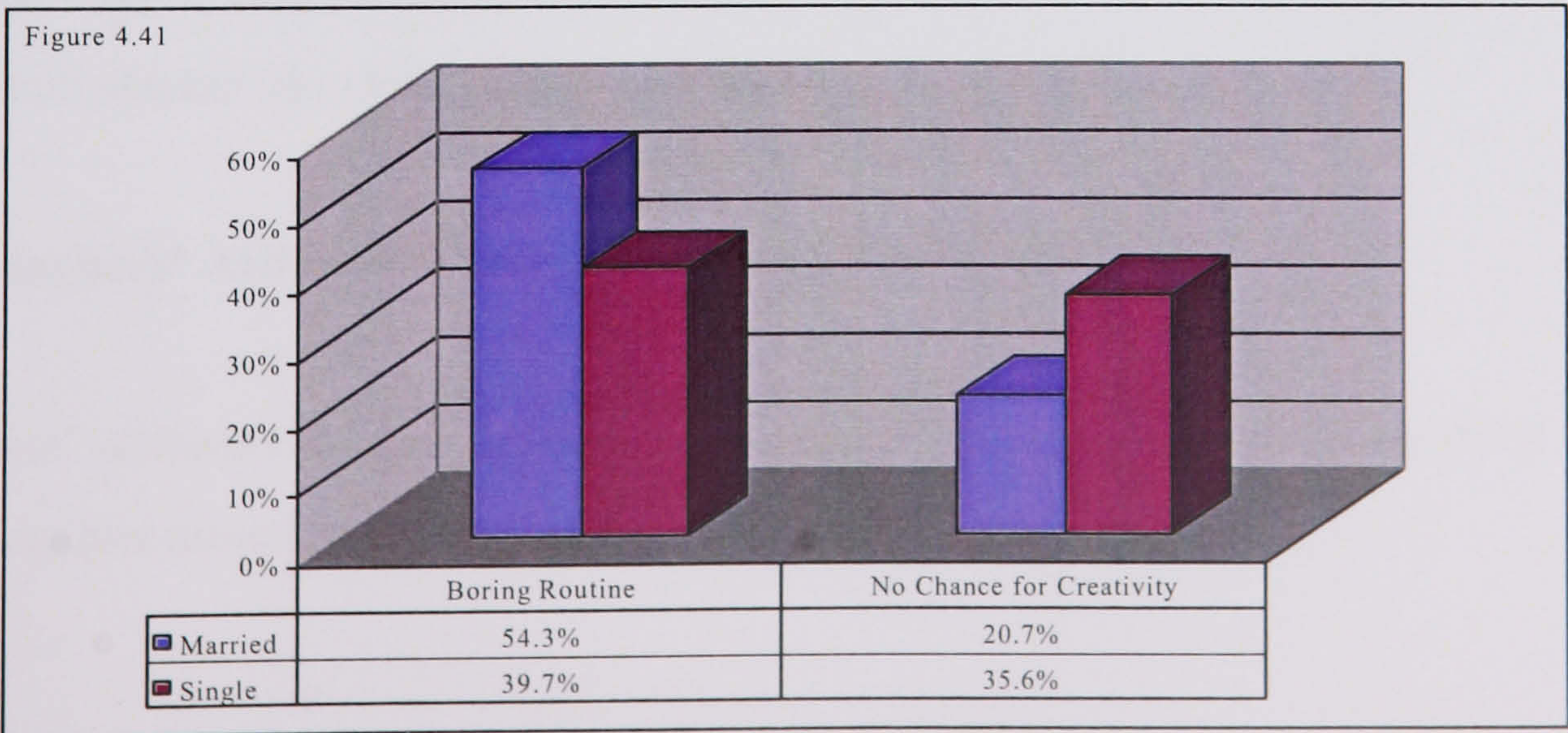
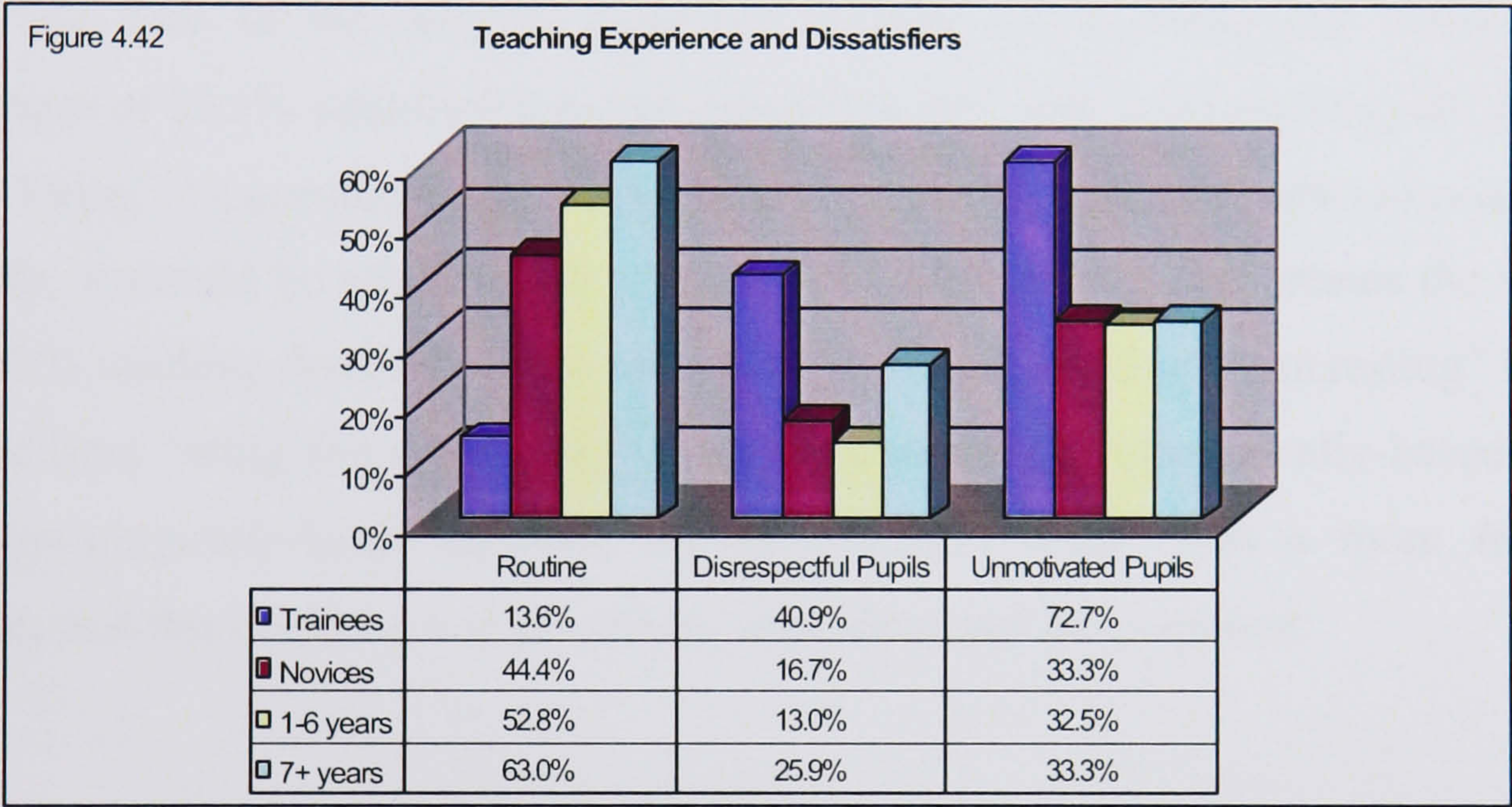


Figure 4.42 shows teaching experience can also be significantly related ($p < .05$) to three sources of teacher job dissatisfaction: “a boring routine”; “disrespectful pupils” and “unmotivated pupils”. It seems that, with experience, more teachers tend to find the pedagogic routine unsatisfying. 13.6% of trainees, compared to 63% of experienced teachers, cited “a boring routine” as one source of their dissatisfaction. 40.9% of trainees found disrespectful pupils a significant dissatisfier, more than any other group. This may be because such behaviour seems to undermine the idealism carried into the classroom by many ingénues: perhaps for similar reasons, 72.7% of trainees found unmotivated pupils dissatisfying.

Figure 4.42: Teaching Experience and Job Dissatisfiers (N=190)



The overall findings from the questionnaire reveal that a majority of teachers felt positive about teaching. Whether this is because teaching was a strong vocation is not very clear. The analysis of the statistical findings from the data indicate that teacher satisfaction, at least in this study, is related to teachers’ personal desires to teach, as well as some background characteristics such as age, marital status and whether or not an individual teacher has children (see chapter 6).

4.8. Teachers’ Attitudes towards Teaching as a Career

Teachers’ attitudes to their careers are also explored. Items in different parts of the questionnaire aimed at finding out:

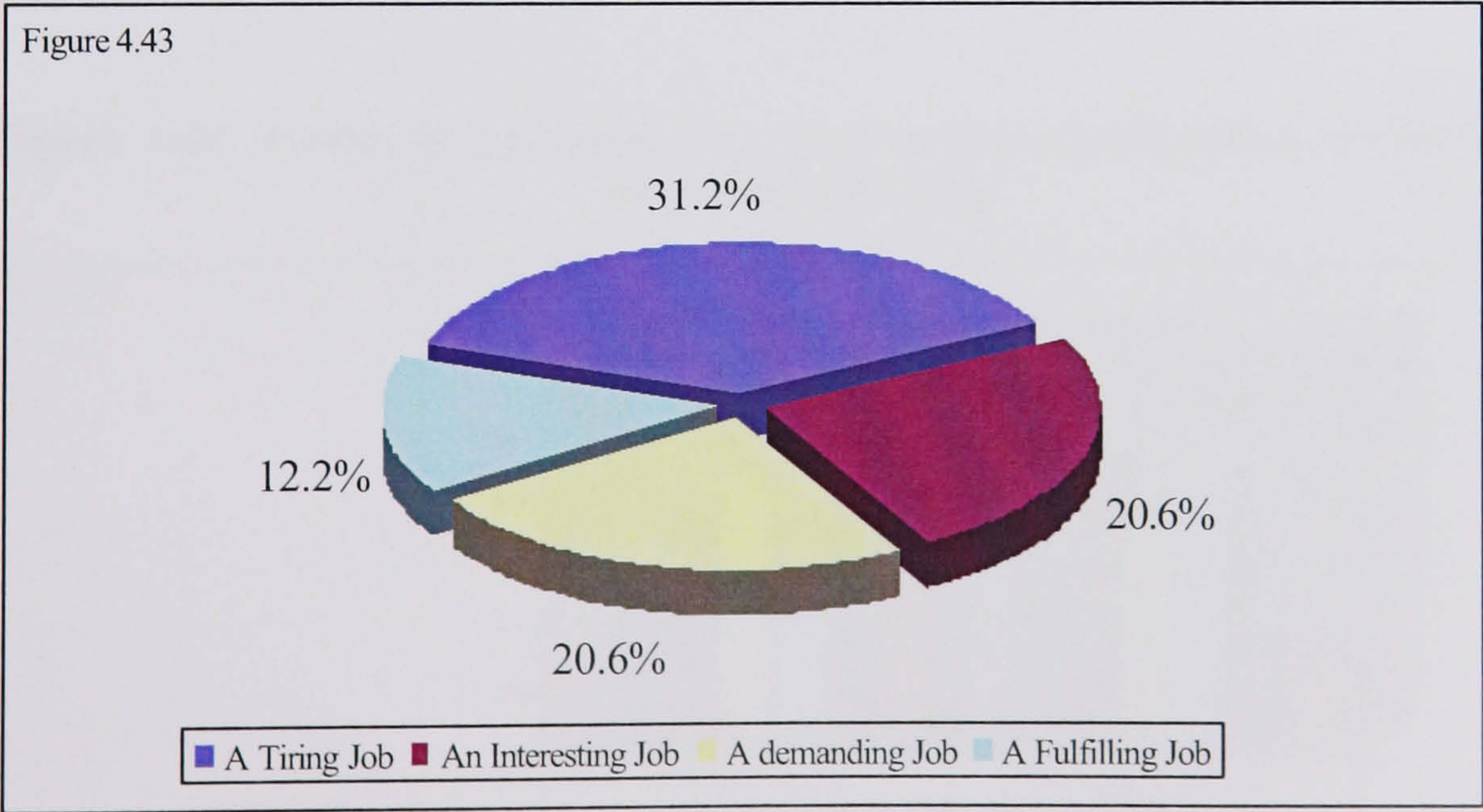
1. The sample’s view of the teaching profession;
2. Whether teachers have seriously considered leaving the profession;
3. The reasons they remain;
4. Whether teaching is what they expected it to be (initial expectations and reality);
and
5. Whether or not, if given the chance, they would again choose teaching as a career.

Statistical analysis of the data gives certain important insights.

4.8.1. Teaching is a ‘Tiring Job’

About one third of the subjects described teaching as “a tiring job” while equal percentages of 20.5% described it as “an interesting job” and “a demanding job” (Figure 4.43). “Tiring”, “interesting” and “demanding” sum up the sample’s views of pedagogy. Crucially, it should be asked which of these dominates the set, and creates the overall context? Is teaching demanding and tiring but, overall, interesting? “Interesting” is very different from “tiring and demanding” – a more fundamental ideologically-based rather than physiologically-based concept, but nonetheless “tiring” was a more frequent response, and this could have implications on professional development.

Figure 4.43: Teachers’ Description of Teaching (N=189)



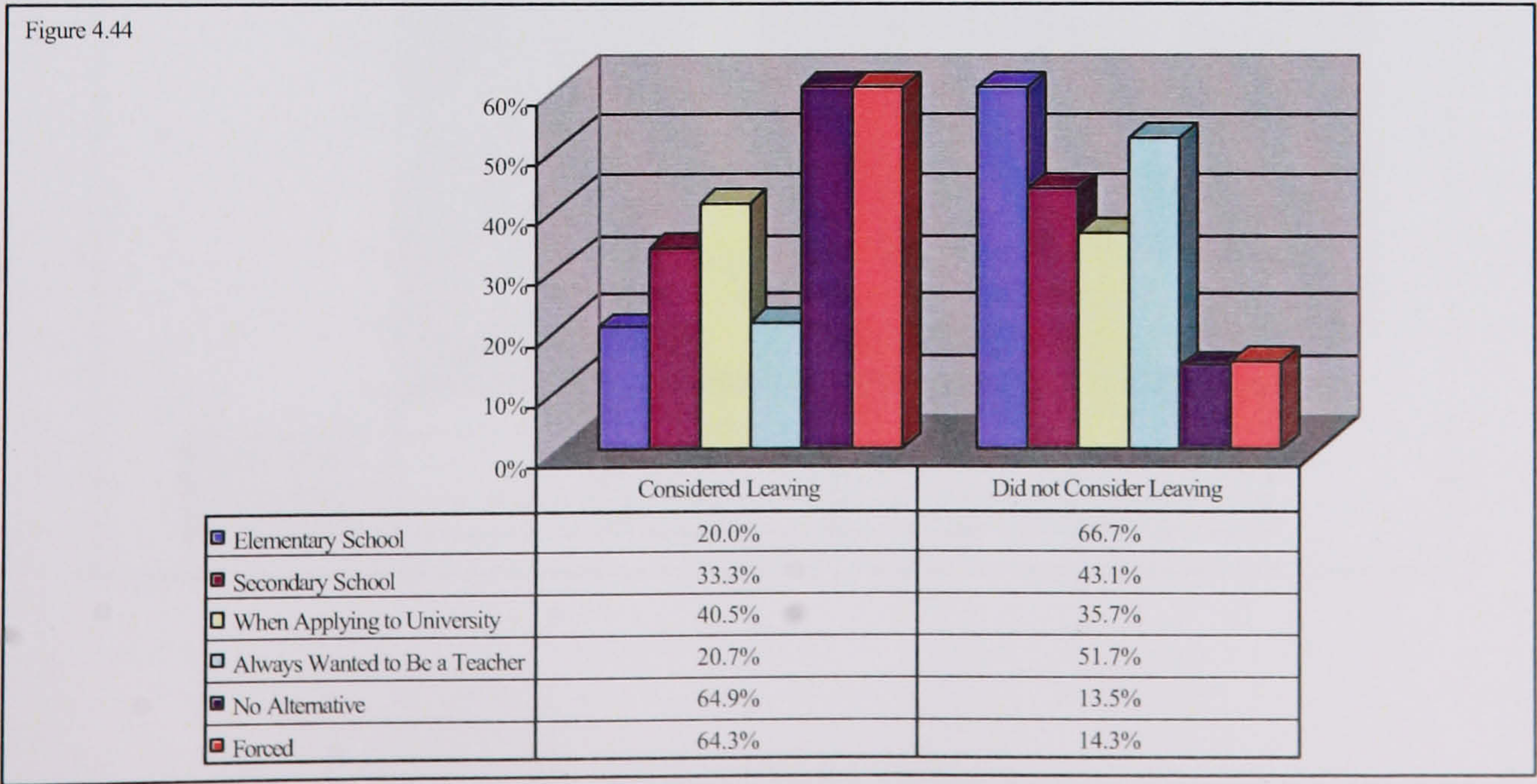
The impact of certain factors on the way teachers viewed their career was also analysed. These factors were age group, teaching experience, marital status, number of children and their ages, timing of the decision to join teaching, motives behind joining teaching and teachers’ current feeling towards their job. However, none of these factors proved significant.

4.8.2. Stay or Leave?

When asked whether they seriously considered leaving teaching, 41.1% of the respondents said yes, 36.3% said no. This high percentage considering quitting could be attributed to the tiring and demanding nature of teaching, as described by the respondents (see 4.8.1). About 40% of respondents who considered leaving described teaching as tiring. Combined with the absence of a real, intrinsically motivated desire to teach, this factor could be a significant reason for some teachers to think of quitting.

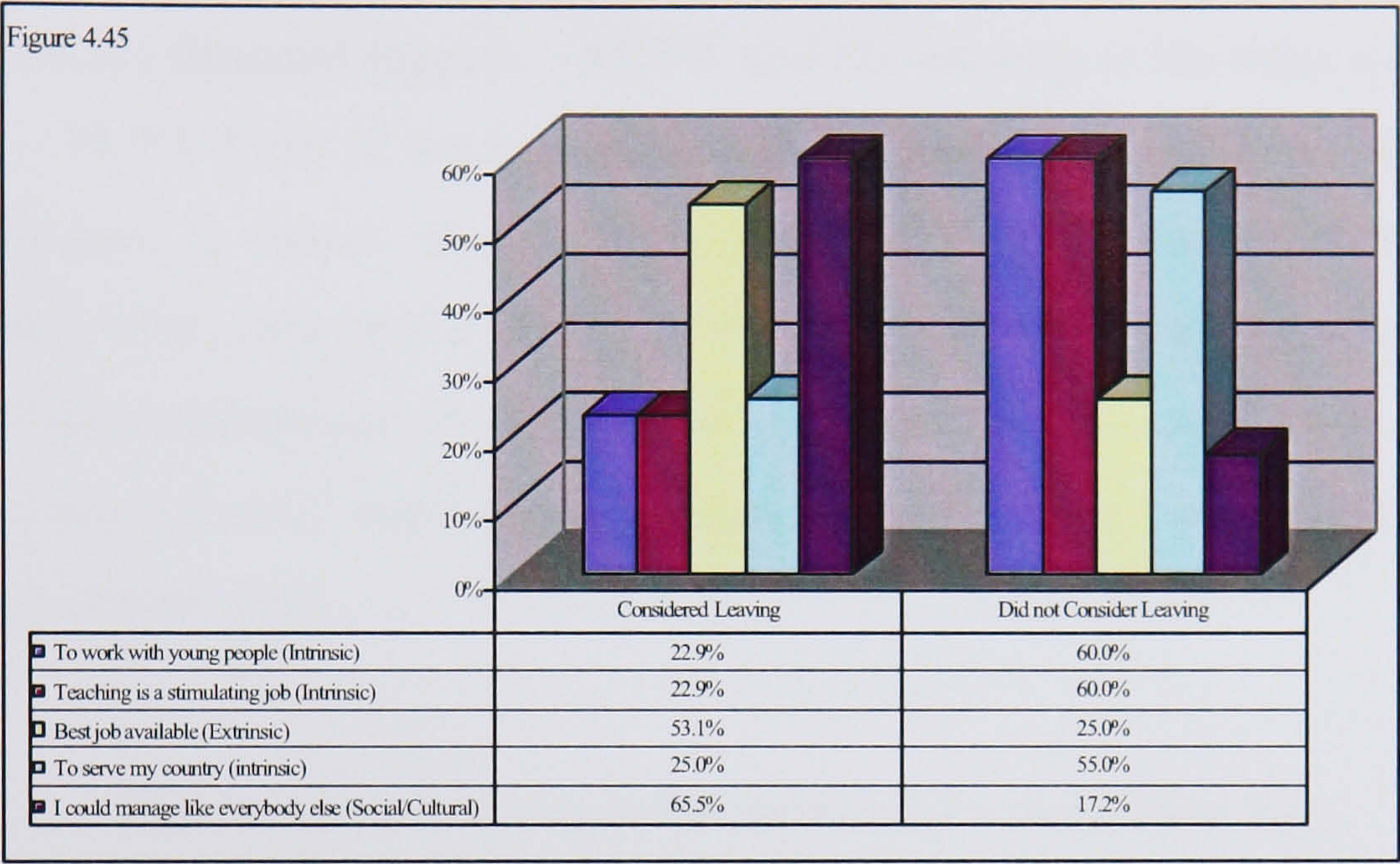
Whether or not a teacher seriously considered leaving her job is significantly associated ($p < .01$) with the time she made the decision to be a teacher and the strength of her desire to teach. Those who considered teaching at elementary school – indicating a deep, early desire to teach – and those who said they always wanted to teach showed the least tendency to think about quitting. Those who said they were forced to teach, or had no alternative, showed the highest tendency to consider leaving the profession (Figure 4.44).

Figure 4.44: Timing of the Decision to Teach and a Consideration of Leaving the Profession (N=188)



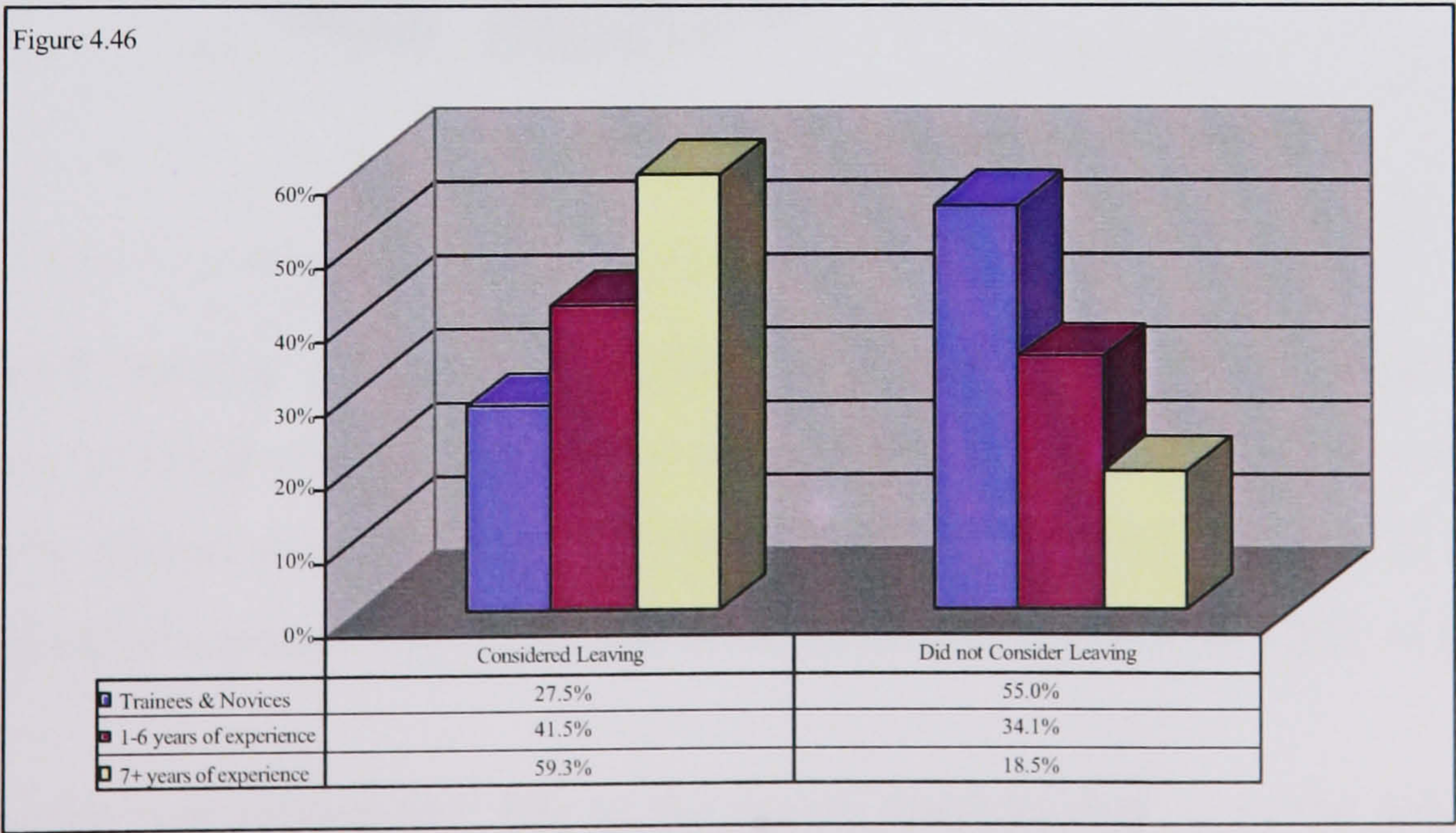
I found reasons behind joining the profession were significantly associated with whether a teacher would consider leaving later. Most who joined for intrinsic motives did not think of leaving; those who joined for extrinsic or social reasons were more likely to say they thought seriously about quitting (Figure 4.45).

Figure 4.45: Reasons to Join Teaching and Considering Leaving (N=168)



I found experience to be highly associated ($p < .01$) with teachers' desires to quit. As teachers spent more time on their job, they tended seriously to consider leaving. More experienced teachers had considered quitting more than the less experienced (Figure 4.46). Trainees and novices may not have made up their mind whether to stay or not.

Figure 4.46: Teaching Experience and Desire to Leave Teaching (N=190)

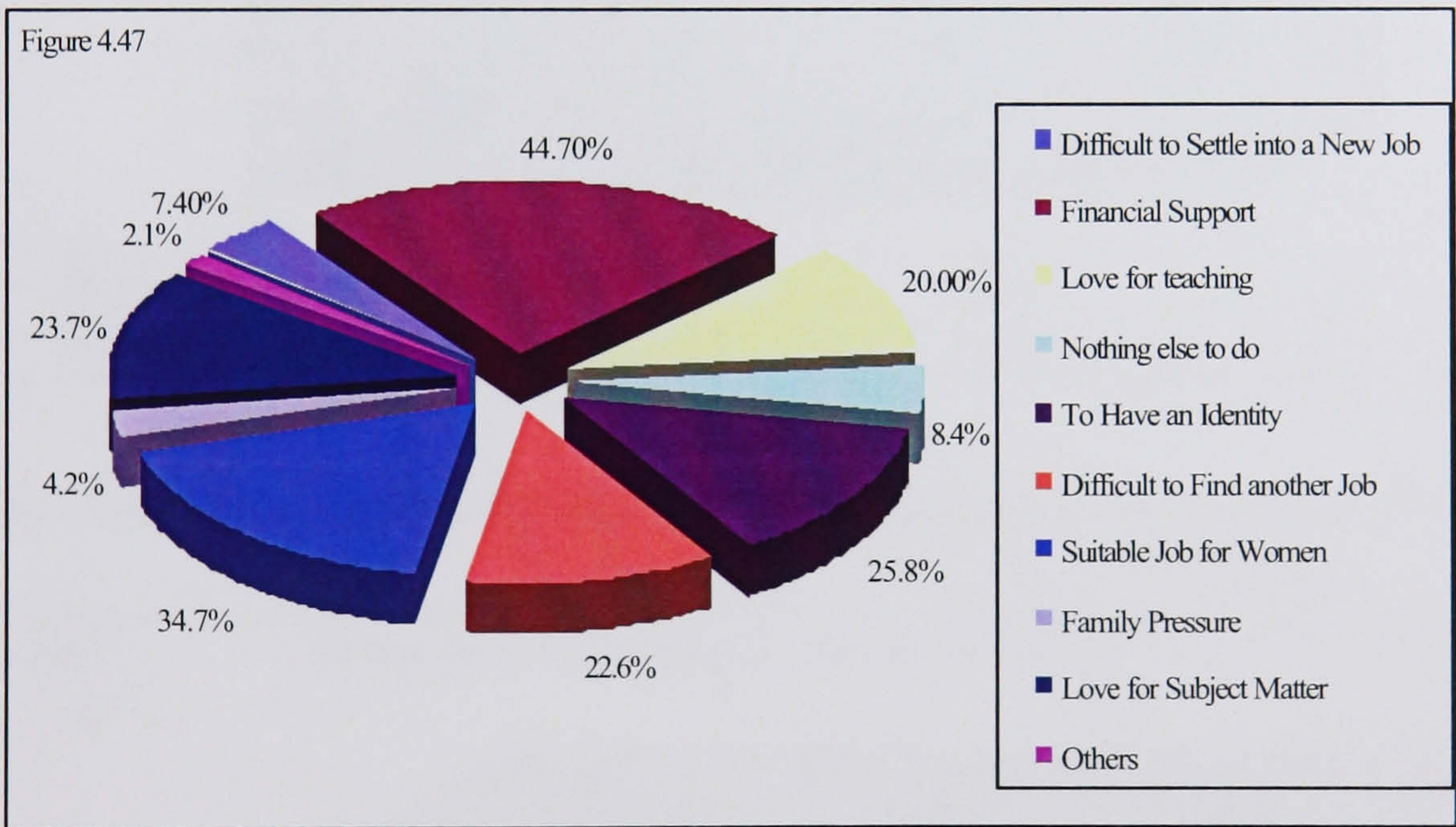


Teachers’ age groups, marital statuses and motherhood were not related ($p > .05$) to whether or not they considered leaving the profession.

4.8.3. Why Stay?

Teachers were asked for two main reasons they remained in teaching. The most common were (1) financial support – 44.7%, and (2) teaching is the most suitable career for women – 34.7%. Love of teaching ranked sixth, chosen by only 20%. This finding is alarming because it means that a large percentage of Omani teachers work for instrumental motives, and only a small percentage stay because they want to. This could uncover serious implications on commitment to teaching, job satisfaction and overall professional development, especially when taken together with the teachers’ description of teaching in Figure 4.43.

Figure 4.47: Reasons to Remain in Teaching (N=190)



Respondents’ reasons to remain in teaching were not related to age group, teaching experience, or influences on their career choices. However, the reasons to remain were found to be related to marital status, children, some of the initial motives to teach, the timing during which such a decision was considered and teachers’ attitudes to their jobs.

Marital status was related ($p < .05$) to the reason teachers remain in the job. Married teachers were more likely to stay in teaching for financial reasons (see Figure 4.48):

salary could be important, because it gives married women a sense of independence. Another reason could be family demands – having children was highly associated ($p<.05$) with why respondents chose to remain teachers. 55.6% with children said financial benefit was one of the reasons they continued teaching, compared to 39.1% of teachers who had none. Teachers with children attached importance to remaining in their job for reasons of salary: this is understandable since financial demands increase with the number of children; the more children, the more pressure there is on the parents' incomes (Figure 4.49).

Figure 4.48: Marital Status and Financial Reasons to Remain in Teaching (N=189)

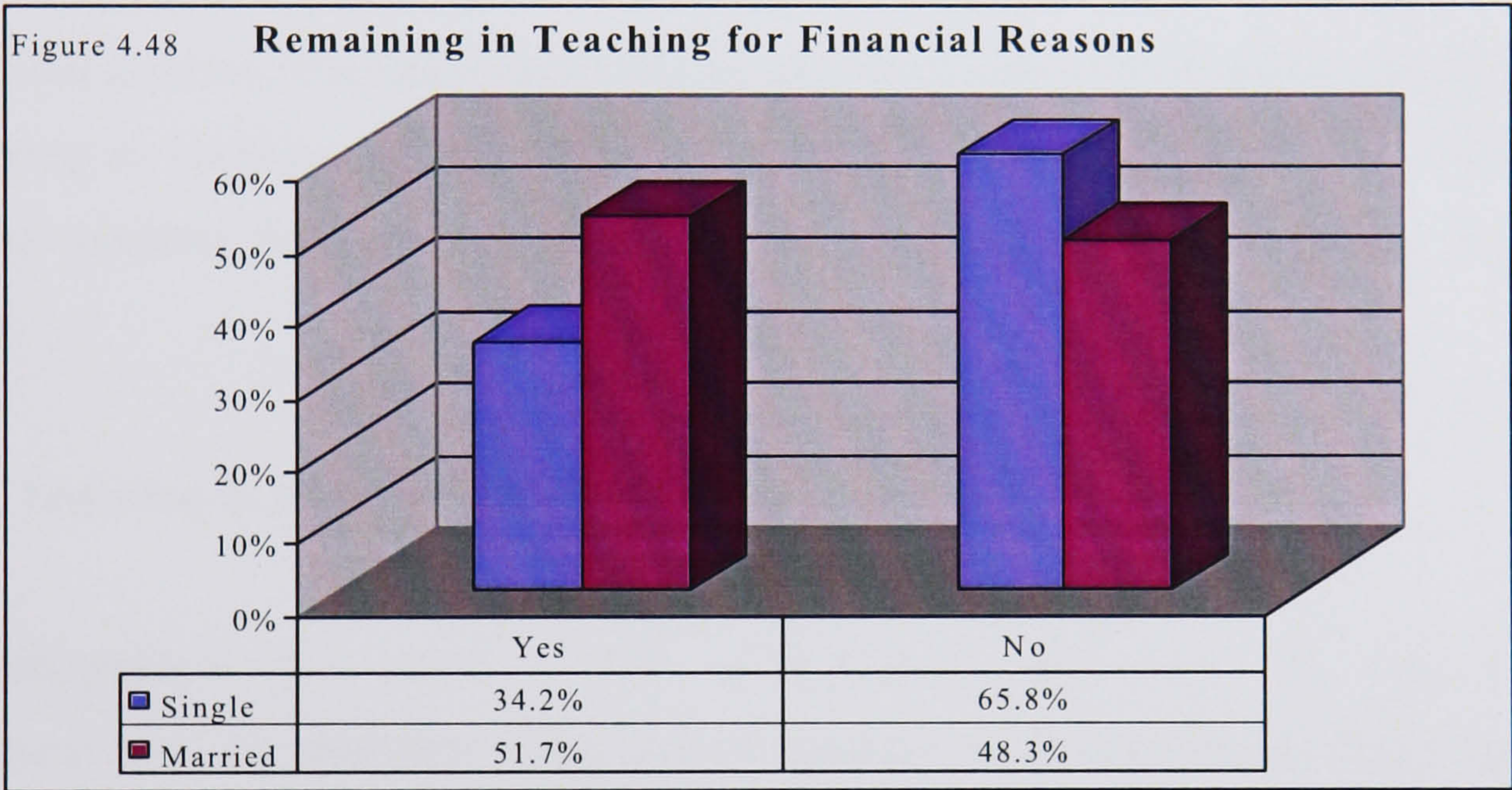
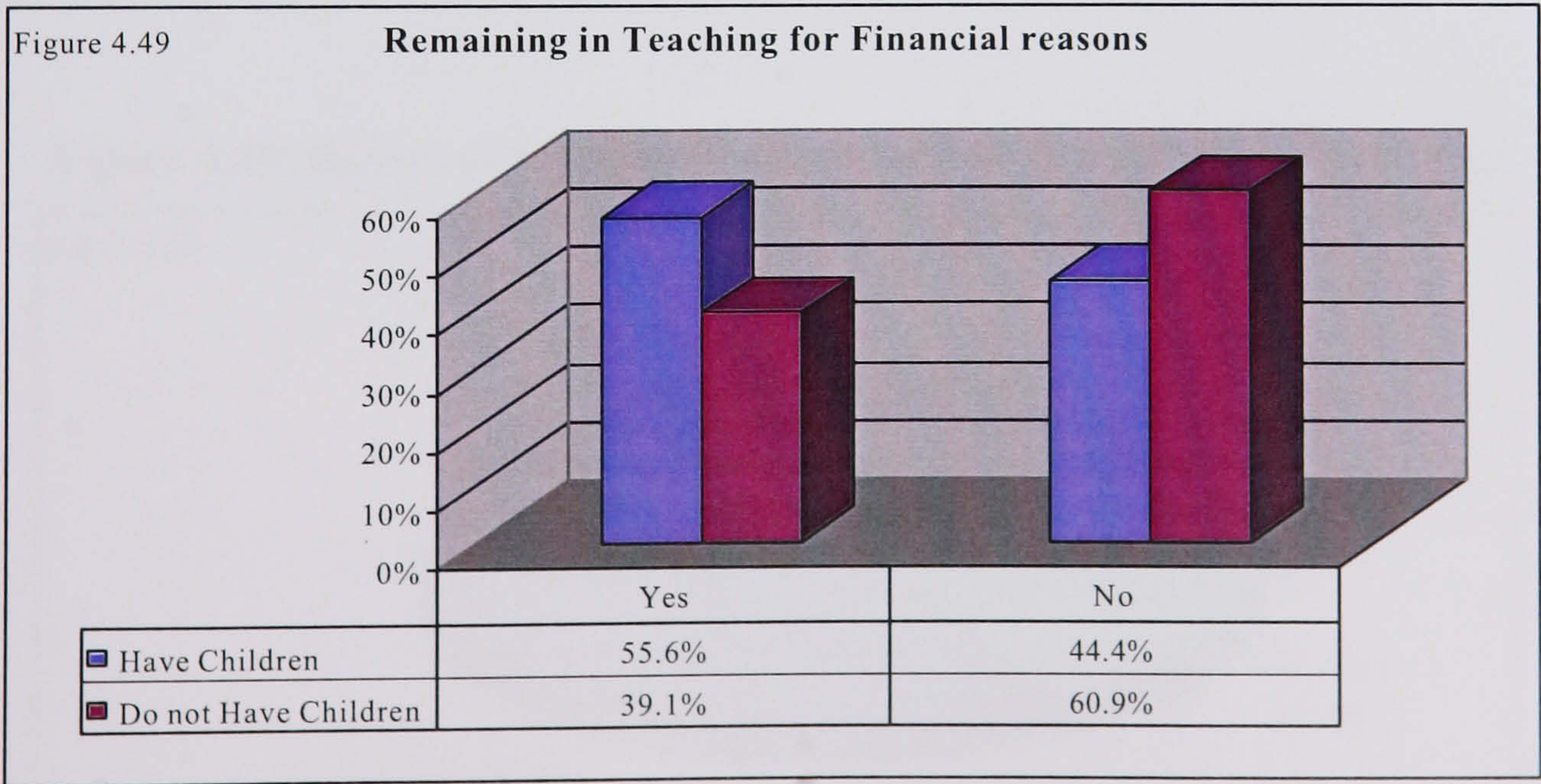


Figure 4.49: Parenthood and Financial Reasons to Remain in Teaching (N=113)

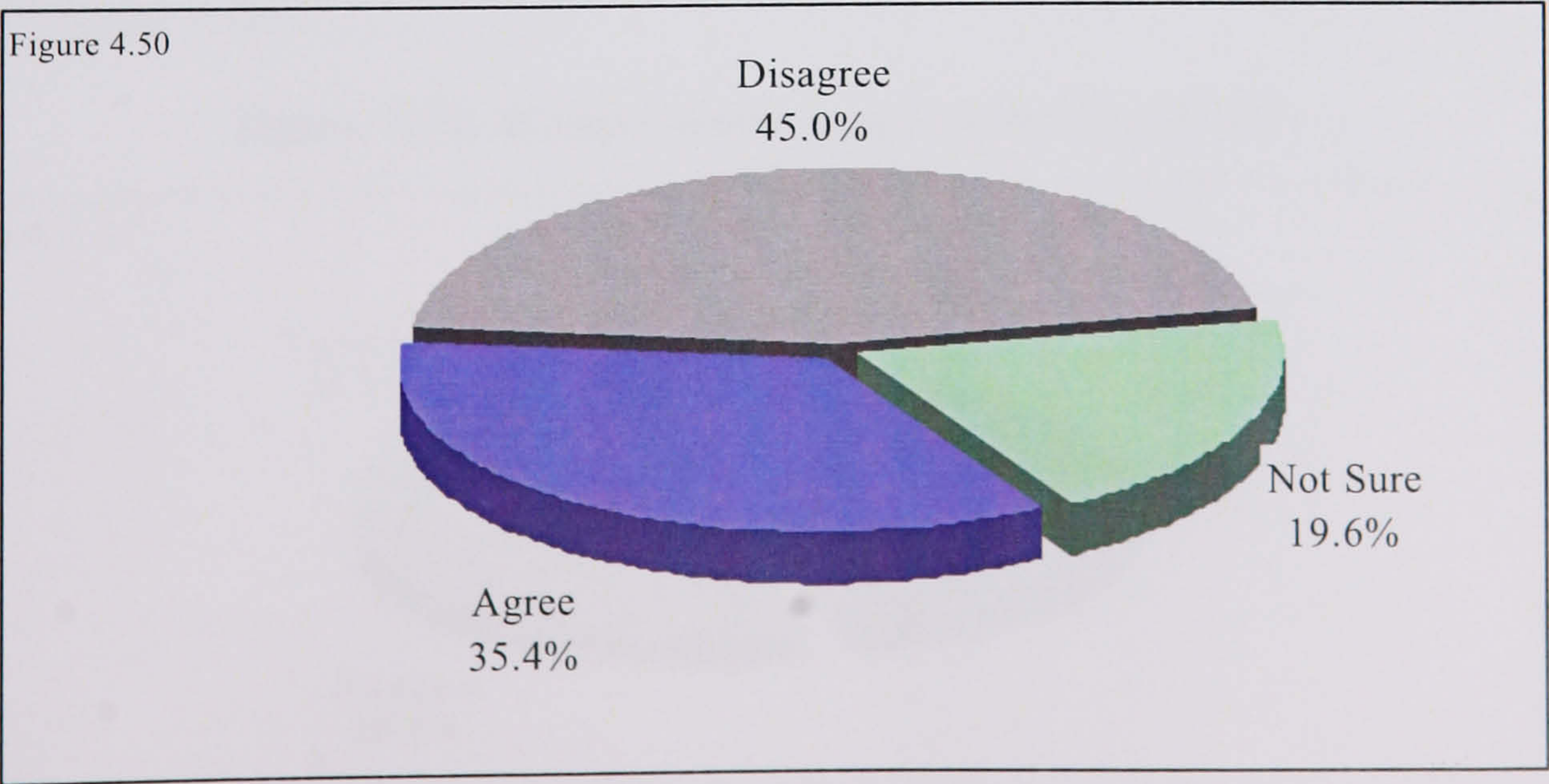


Remaining in teaching because of a love of the job is significantly associated ($p<.01$) with three intrinsic motives: (1) The desire to work with young people; (2) the stimulation and satisfaction of the job, and (3) the love of passing on knowledge and skills – basic pedagogy. It is clear from these findings that teachers who chose teaching for intrinsic reasons would remain in the profession for similarly intrinsic reasons. Three socio-cultural motives were related to similar social reasons for remaining in teaching. Parental/family pressure, family tradition (other members of the family are teachers), and teaching being an all-female work environment were all significantly related ($p<.05$) to remaining in teaching as the most suitable job for women, and/or as a result of family pressure. Women who teach because they believe it is a job most suitable for them, or because of a family tradition or pressure, were very likely to stay for similar reasons. Moreover, there was an association between becoming a teacher and remaining in teaching for the income it provides ($p<.05$). It seems that those who became teachers because they found the salary appealing, continued for the same reason.

4.8.4. Teaching is Exactly What I Expected

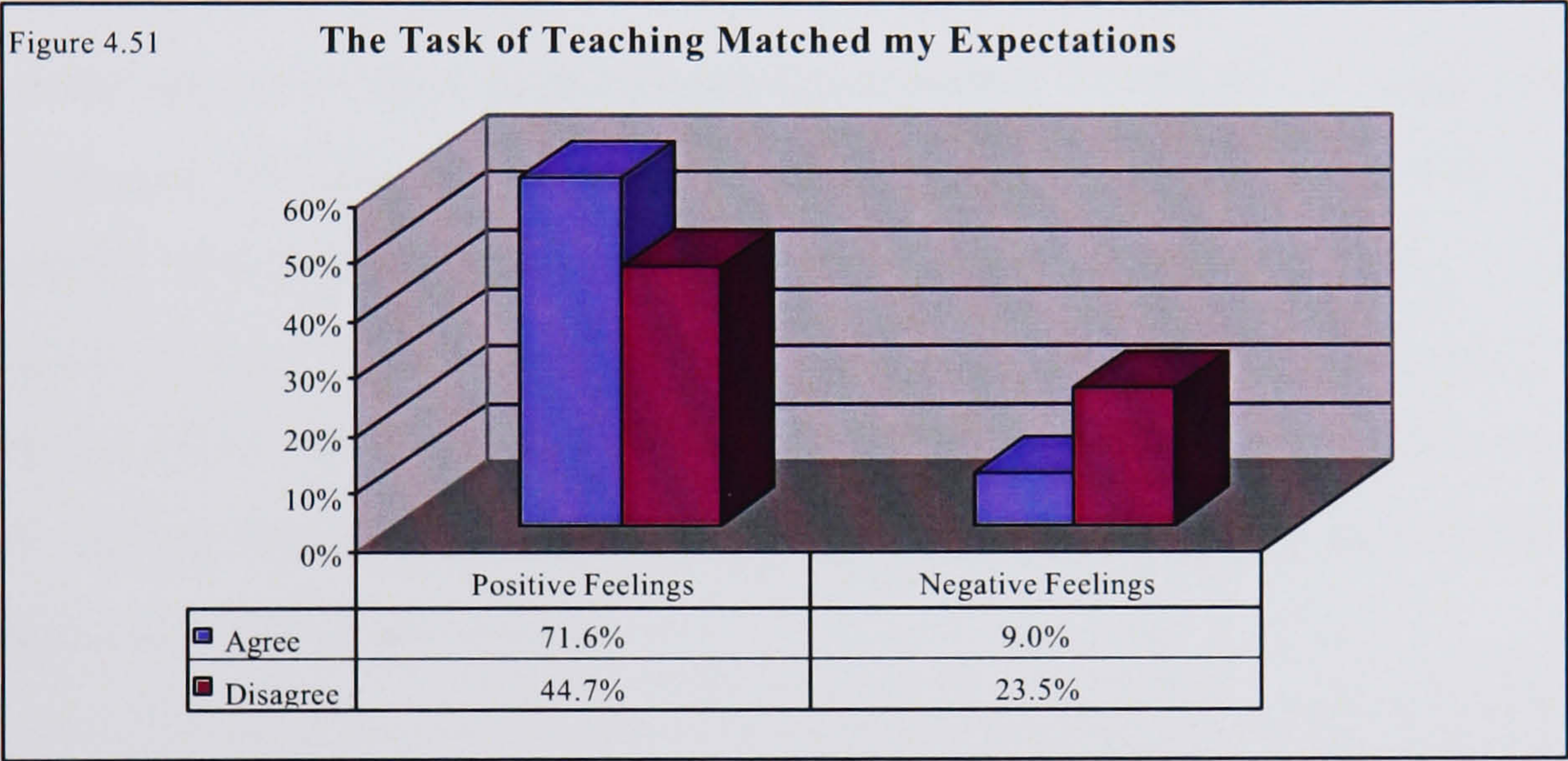
The respondents were asked to state, on a Lickert scale from 1-5, their level of agreement with the statement “The task of teaching has been exactly what I expected before I became a teacher”. 45% of the sample responded in the negative while 35.3% agreed: a statistically significantly lower rating ($p=0.028$)- Figure 4.50. Thus, for the majority of respondents, the task of teaching was not what they expected.

Figure 4.50: Reality of Teaching Matched Expectations of the Task (N=189)



There was no relationship ($p>.05$) between respondents' age groups, teaching experiences, timings of their decisions to join teaching, influences on their career choices, and reasons to become teachers, with their expectations of the pedagogic task. It was found that of those who said their expectations matched pedagogic reality, most were happier in their career ($p<.01$). Over 71% of respondents who agreed, had positive feelings about teaching; teachers whose expectations did not match reality were found to have more negative feelings (Figure 4.51). Perhaps the key here is a realistic understanding of pedagogy, and the goals of such a career.

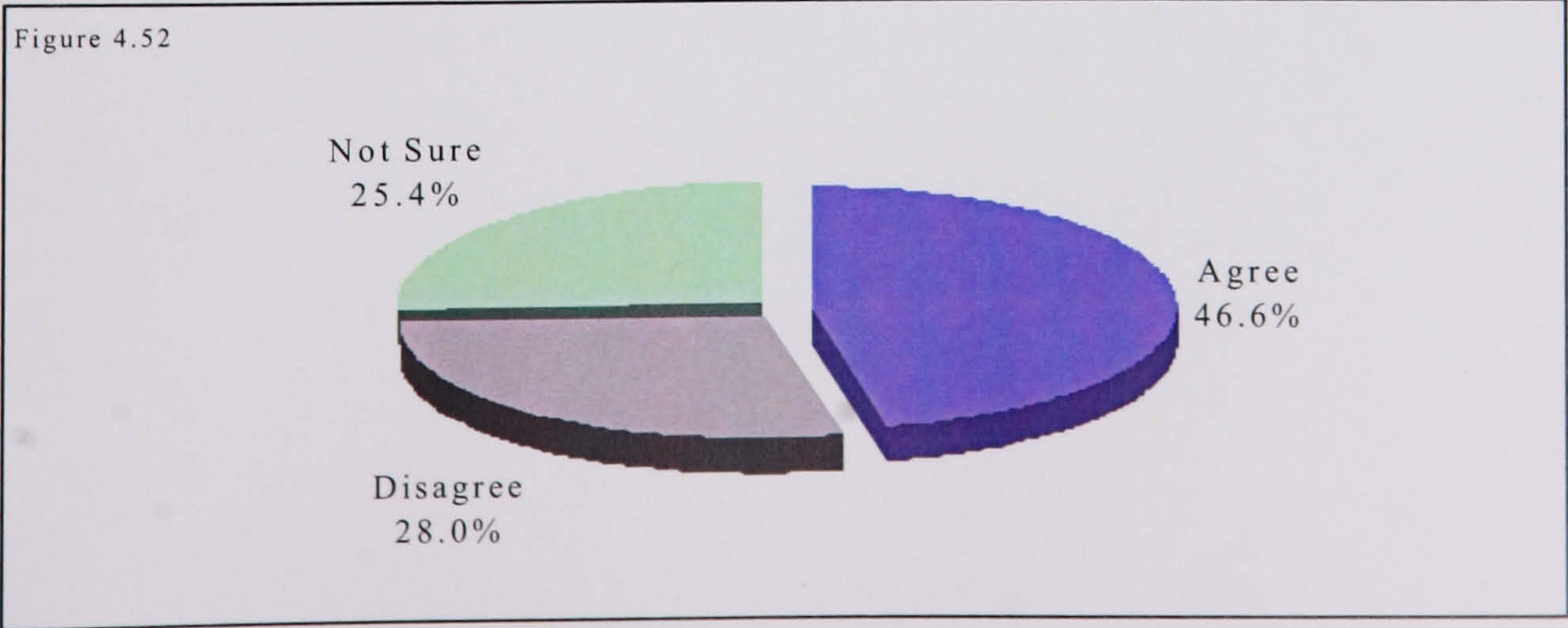
Figure 4.51: Task Expectations and Feelings about Teaching (N=189)



4.8.5. Choose Teaching Again?

The respondents were asked to state, also on a Lickert scale from 1-5, their level of agreement with the statement “Given the chance again, I would definitely choose teaching as my career”. Over 46% agreed, while a significantly lower 28% ($p<0.001$) did not (Figure 4.52).

Figure 4.52: Would Choose Teaching Again? (N=189)



4.9. Summary of Chapter

This chapter reported on the statistical analysis of the questionnaire data, and consisted of six main sections: sample profile; what attracts Omani women to teaching; career stages; work and family life; to what extent Omani teachers are satisfied with their job and the sources of their satisfaction; and teachers' attitudes to teaching. The data will be used in chapters 5, 6 and 7, where it is compared and contrasted to the data generated by the guided interviews.

From the questionnaire findings, there appear to be two periods in teachers' lives with a far-reaching impact on their professional development: (1) the period during which the decision to join teaching is considered, and the timing, influences on and reasons for that decision; and (2) the initial period of the teaching career, including doubts, and expectations. These periods indicate developments that have implications on how teachers feel about their jobs and how they understand their jobs - whether they would consider leaving; why they would choose to remain; and whether they would choose teaching again, if given the chance.

The impact of the first period, especially the initial motives and the timing of decisions made to join the profession, is crucial and influences (or at least correlates with) all subsequent aspects of professional development. In a way, the first period and the way it affects a teacher can be considered a template for what is to come. Personal characteristics such as marital status, age, personality and expectations, also play their parts in developing a teaching career, as I hope to demonstrate with my data analysis in the following chapters.

Chapter Five: *Teacher Career Stages: Perspectives from the Omani Experience*

5.1. Introduction

This chapter is concerned with a discussion of the research data gathered from both the questionnaires and interviews on teachers' career stages. In the analysis, I found contextual factors play a key role in progression across the various phases. Since socio-economic changes affecting Oman since its 1970 "renaissance" have had enormous and multifarious impacts, to tease any particular sequence of effects out from the whole picture may be unrealistic. It is certainly true, perhaps particularly in the relatively under-researched Omani context, where sociological information is rare, that "studies of teachers' lives might allow us to see the individual in relation to the history of his or her time, allowing us to view the intersection of the life history with the history of the society... ." (Goodson, 1992b: 119) In other words, pedagogical research does more than merely spotlight individual teachers' psychologies – or indeed only the psychology or sociology of a specific group. Data gathered on teachers' experiences and concerns, their hopes and frustrations, can be much more than simply an examination of pedagogy in a particular country at a particular time: Goodson's comment should allow pedagogic research a chance for deeper reflection. In the context of such research as a generative microcosm of a wider society, it is important to establish in which ways Omani teachers' career stages are similar to, or different from the stages postulated in the literature. It is also important to point out that, although I am discussing teachers' careers in terms of phases, conceptualizing teacher development as a sequence of stages that all teachers go through is naïve, and could result in an oversimplification of the pedagogic professional development process. (Day, 1999) It is, in fact, as Huberman (1995: 196) asserts "...a process filled with plateaus, discontinuities, regressions, spurts and dead ends". Through all this, two aspects need to be borne in mind: that context is both enlightening of and enlightened by research; and that the Omani context is not just another "developmental" model.

The first research question sets out to define the career patterns of Omani EFL teachers. The specific research question develops into four subsequent lines of enquiry.

1. Is there a general sequence of stages through which Omani EFL teachers move in their career? If so
 - a) What are these stages?
 - b) Are they similar to the stages of teacher career development identified by the relevant literature?
 - c) What are the characteristic concerns of trainees and teachers at each of the different stages?
 - d) What part does professional experience play in the teachers' progression between the different stages?

I found that there is indeed a general sequence of stages that Omani EFL teachers progress through in their career. These stages are, in some respects, similar to those identified in the literature as teachers' main career stages. However, due to population particularities and other demographic contextual factors, the stages had their own distinctive features.

The reviewed literature on teachers' career stages helped me analyse and interpret the research data – of particular use were Huberman (1992), Day (1999), Christensen and Fessler (1992), Sikes (1985) and Fuller (1969). These studies and the frameworks that resulted from them were important in the interpretation of the data. I have “borrowed” some terms, such as Fuller's (1969) terms for the first two phases in her model which I used for the two sub-phases in the first stage of teacher career in my study, and ideas which seemed most relevant to both the Omani context and my chosen methodology. However, most of the literature on teachers' development concerns pre-service training and the first year of teaching. It was difficult, therefore, to adopt a single framework to suit my research sample.

Although context is a powerful, central issue in the discussion of the career stages through which teachers move, there are “universal characteristics” that apply: for example, my research has identified teachers' need for recognition of their efforts by

superiors. Context-related differences in findings should act as a warning not to over-generalize, and sensitize researchers to subtle social and other influences.

The model I posit will be concerned with the career stages of teachers with up to 10 years experience; the teaching experience of my sample only ranges over a decade – based around the first batch of teachers who graduated from SQU in 1990. In 5.2, the data of the questionnaires and interviews is discussed in the light of specific stages: the academic, novitiate, maturation and mid-career phases. Further research is needed to examine later career stages, but because of the specifics of the Omani context, it is not immediately relevant here.

5.2. Teachers' Concerns and Career Stages

5.2.1. Stage One: The Academic Stage

This stage takes place during the pre-service training period. The preparation programme orientates trainees towards their future pedagogic roles. Most models of teachers' career stages do not include this period, however, Fuller (1969) and Fessler and Christensen (1992) consider it one of the key stages. It might be argued that the training period should not be considered part of teacher career development. I include it because I believe it has a lasting and profound effect on teachers' professional development. During this period trainees move through two distinct sub-phases: the “no teaching concerns phase” and the “early teaching concerns phase”.

5.2.1.1. The No Teaching Concerns Phase

The length of this stage varies depending on the structure and length of the pre-service training programme, and whether it stresses teaching practice (TP) early in the programme. The practicalities of classroom experience begin with TP, and the “no teaching concerns phase” pre-dates this. Trainees used in my research started their teaching practice component during the last year of their programme, and my sample had all experienced teaching practice; however, trainee interviewees were encouraged to

reflect on their training in general, including that period before they started teaching practice.

At this stage, trainees are still, in some sense, pupils themselves, and that is exactly how they see themselves: they are predominantly concerned with their academic performance as undergraduates. Despite studying pedagogy, and knowing they will probably become teachers when they graduate, they show no apparent concerns about teaching or being a teacher. This concurs with Fuller's (1969) description of the pre-teaching stage. However, taking micro-teaching courses can force these students to see themselves as teachers. This in turn can initiate early teaching concerns, of which the most recurrent is anxiety about whether they will prove adequate to the task. In talking about the value of the education courses she had taken, Farah, a trainee, raises the issue of not perceiving oneself as a teacher before actually starting teaching – either in micro-teaching or teaching practice.

It would have been more beneficial if we had taken the education courses and the psychology courses closer to the time when we started the teaching practice in the schools. We currently take these courses during the second year and start the teaching practice during the fourth year. At the time we took these courses we never thought they would be useful for us as teachers because we took them in a period when we didn't imagine ourselves as teachers. (Farah)

There is therefore the possibility of a disjuncture between conceptualizing the role of teacher and placing oneself within that role; more basically still, those who begin TP may not yet have any model of themselves as a teacher: “we didn't imagine ourselves as teachers” suggests the work of imagination takes place *during* practice itself. Suddenly the pedagogic reality is upon the student, and this allows little room for true preparation or reflection; teaching may too easily become reaction rather than reflection in this unprepared context.

5.2.1.2. The Early Teaching Concerns Phase

“In the school department, it is as if they [student teachers] are on loan.”

(Grenfell, 1996: 297)

This stage begins just before and/or during practice, when teaching becomes more of a reality for the student. Being in a school environment and acting out the role of teacher can be both an interesting and distressing experience for student teachers. Practical training is in the nature of a “test” of pedagogic ability. This is not made easier by performances being evaluated by supervisors, watching while trainees attempt to put pedagogic philosophy into practice. Reality could be very different from the pedagogic environment they imagined. Discovery, anxiety about performance and adequacy, concern with survival in the classroom, and with control and discipline are the hallmarks of this stage. As Grenfell observes, all these elements can create a disjunction between trainee and collegiate environment; to cap it all, trainees may feel unhappy with an environment they have not chosen, perhaps in a region they do not know, and will be all too aware of the shortness of their tenures.

5.2.1.2.1. Emotional Concerns

Trainees generally value TP as an interesting and beneficial experience, perhaps for some as a way of bridging the gap between training and school. (Calderhead and Shorrock, 1997; Ezzaki, 1997 and Hauge, 2000) 77% of trainee questionnaire respondents agreed that they felt they had gained pedagogic experience, and felt more confident with every new experience. 90.9% described their current situation as “still discovering” (see 4.4); discovery more than offsets the accompanying emotional stress. However, 31.8% of trainees described TP as a “frightening” experience (see 4.4). This could be linked to the trainee feeling apprehensive and unprepared for such a new role (see 5.2.1.2.3).

The most enthusiastic are those who chose the profession for themselves. “Yes, I love teaching. Every time I go to the classroom I am interested. Sometimes I even tell my class I love them.” (Bayan) This is emotional commitment manifesting itself as vocational passion. On the other extreme, lacking a vocation can lead to a bitter sense of alienation from teaching practice and consequently from teaching as a whole. Noor did not want to be a teacher – she had always dreamt of becoming a journalist but under parental pressure, itself driven by the idea that teaching was the most suitable career for women, she enrolled in the College of Education. Her alienation from her TP

experience is plain: “when I went to school the first day I didn’t enjoy it one bit unlike most of the other trainees. I didn’t enjoy the experience. I hated teaching.” Meera is a new teacher who initially did not want to become a teacher but enrolled in the College of Education to follow her favoured specialization, English. Meera describes more eloquently feelings very similar to Noor’s concerning the first TP experience – “... the first day I taught I felt like a stranger in the classroom. I didn’t feel it was my place but was forced to be there. I was really scared...” This sense of alienation is an emotion many trainees experience when they start training in schools; the rapidity with which they overcome this feeling and adjust to their new role varies – if they overcome it at all. Trainees’ personality traits and the extent to which the school environment is welcoming and supportive are just two examples of influential factors.

Many feel proud to be teaching: it is a dream come true; others may feel it is a way for others to achieve their dreams vicariously – perhaps, and most often, the dreams of parents. Maha remembers feeling proud: “I was proud of myself. I was happy to be the one who was giving instructions to the whole class.” In another quote she describes her pride in becoming a colleague of her former teachers in the school she was training in “I used to feel ‘wow’. I had a strange feeling. I was once a pupil in this school and now I am sitting with my former teachers chatting to and drinking coffee with them.” Aseel describes her feelings during TP: “I used to feel happy when the pupils called me ‘teacher’.” Safa shares similar feelings, but there is a sense that pride is achieved in retrospect, rather than directly: “I felt proud to some extent. Being in a group where everybody is listening to me was something new to me. Someone was interested in what I was saying because it was considered important.” She herself, crucially, does not consider what she says important; importance is achieved instead because “it was considered important” by others – in this case her pupils. Pride is achieved indirectly, through the filter of pupils’ perceptions. Reem achieves pride for simpler and perhaps more frequent reasons, and acknowledges the very special origin of those emotions she feels: “It’s different when you are a teacher. The feeling is different. As a teacher the pupils fear you. You have prestige and respect. I was happy and proud of myself for that.” Pride is achieved within a socio-political context of power used to achieve status; the disguises and subtleties which may be disingenuously used by teachers in the west are not considered necessary by Reem: fear creates respect and this in turn generates

pride. One would have to wonder how creative the use of fear is in pedagogical terms, and how the emotional development of a teacher would be restricted by a reliance on it.

There is a considerable amount of indecisiveness about commitment to teaching. Being young, and about to start a practical working life, student teachers tend to be indecisive about committing to a life-long career in teaching. Zakia seemed uninterested that, in a few months, she was going to become a teacher. When asked if she imagined herself a teacher in the coming months, she made it clear that teaching was not her vocation.

It is sure that everybody who graduates from the College of Education will essentially become teachers, but it never occurred to me that *I* will be one. ... I don't know what my future plans are but I am not intending to continue in teaching ... I might do a masters ... I don't have a clear idea now.

The notion of vocation is frequently obscured by either confusion, or displaced by disillusionment, or non-existent.

5.2.1.2.2. Pedagogical Concerns and Difficulties

At this stage of their training, student teachers struggle through many difficulties, mostly concerned with the pedagogic task, dealing with pupils and a lack of sufficient or adequate guidance. Most of the difficulties respondents faced were the result of having an inadequate picture of a teaching career, and therefore their own future. This means that many trainees in Oman start TP believing teaching will be easy: overall, a 'rosy' picture of teaching. (Veenman, 1984 and Lortie, 1975) They have constructed their model of teaching from their own very subjective and one-sided experiences as pupils – an experience from “the other side of the desk”. (Lortie, 1975) 45% of the questionnaire sample admitted that the task of teaching was not what they had expected before they started TP. The statistical analysis of the questionnaire data (see 4.8.4) found that those whose expectations matched pedagogic realities were happier in their career.

Trainees experience a milder form of the “reality shock” that inevitably affects new teachers at the outset of their teaching careers. Zakia confesses that she had never thought teaching involved so much work. She said she did not realize there was so

much paper-work. She says she felt it was “too much [for her] to take”. Farah says she found teaching a “tiring job”, not what she predicted before TP. This makes trainees feel insecure in a familiar setting, yet in a strange position. Familiarity may not necessarily help a trainee or novice teacher with the problems of the unexpected – indeed it is possible that familiarity, the model of the pedagogic situation the new teacher brings with them, acts to disguise, distort or postpone the reality of the classroom, and the reality of the teacher’s presence there. Clearly, there is a disparity apparent in the respondents’ comments between reality and expectation, which is unaddressed by training. The difficulty is thus rather a dilemma caused by an inadequate philosophy of pedagogy expressed in the specific example of TP.

Preparation and planning is one of the main areas of difficulty for trainees. 50% of trainee questionnaire respondents reported these difficulties, and 77.3% said they always spend more time and effort planning and preparing their lessons. Getting ideas for teaching challenges trainees – 63.6% said that being creative in terms of teaching ideas and methods is difficult; 36.9% of respondents said that finding new ideas and strategies is an occasional problem, while 36.4% said they needed help in this area and 13.6% said that preparation and planning always had been a major problem for them. This indicates trainees’ concern with the preparation and planning aspect of pedagogy. Furthermore, 40.9% of trainees reported that effective selection and teaching of content is a problem at times while 31.8% admitted they needed training in this aspect (see 4.4) Interviewees also elaborated on the amount of time and effort they put into this area. Shama says lesson preparation is “difficult”, as is the implementation of the lesson. Some trainees also talked of the difficulties they had, from preparing lessons to their academic work, which demands considerable time and effort.

The problem is that one is busy with the academic courses one is taking at university and at the same time one needs to prepare for teaching practice. You tend to think of different things and cannot concentrate on one thing. This system of going to practice in schools twice a week while attending courses at the university has more disadvantages than advantages. (Noora)

Overall, the difficulties encountered in preparation and planning TP, while balancing academic work at SQU, would probably be articulated by teacher trainees anywhere: though the Omani system of spreading out TP rather than concentrating it within a

single term (thus giving a more realistic initiation to the classroom) may be unreasonable and distracting. From the respondents' replies it seems the current system does not balance the practicalities of TP with academic requirements.

Another issue raised from contact with trainees and teachers from the interior regions of Oman is that, although they lived and studied, initially, in the interior, and that is where they would probably end up teaching, their training was done at SQU in Muscat. Coming from a rural environment and training in a relatively urban one may present difficulties of a socio-cultural kind: the schools and pupils and their problems in Muscat are distinctive, more cosmopolitan – in the sense that there is a greater intensity of non-Arab cultural influences – than in other areas of Oman. Also, pupils' attitudes to the English language and their proficiency in it are more positive and linked with the American cultural influences from media, than pupils in other regions where there is not much use of or for English, or much contact with people who speak it. This socio-cultural difference adds to the psychological pressures on trainees from the interior, who are already aware of discipline and other problems pupils may cause, especially for them. Farah comes from a small village and in 2001 did her training in a school in Muscat, and had heard of problems. “[M]aybe I was influenced by the other trainees who were ahead of me. We used to hear about their problems with the pupils, the supervisor and the school principal. So, we were very scared. The idea I got from others affected me negatively. I was very nervous.” Noor was keenly aware of the Omani socio-cultural divide. “It is sure that the school girls in the interior of Oman care more about their studies, respect their teachers more and are much more quiet in class, but their level in English is lower than pupils in Muscat.” Amina is from the interior of Oman, and clearly remembers her problematic experience in Muscat schools. “I was definitely scared of teaching in Muscat schools. I was happy to be a teacher but was also afraid of the new experience and unsure of the pupils' reaction to us. I was shocked to find out that it was much more difficult to deal with pupils in Muscat. They were mischievous unlike our pupils here.” This regional disparity in behaviour and even achievement may not be unique to Oman, but in a country which has developed so quickly in so short a time, it is likely that such disparities, and the socio-cultural consequences for pedagogy, will both be exaggerated: regional economic growth, social change and access to modern information systems are not uniform across the Sultanate.

Although such socio-cultural problems might seem insignificant, they add a stressful element to TP. Later, when new teachers are appointed to regional schools, they continue to compare the two worlds, this time usually in favour of the schools in Muscat. This may be because, in the interior, pupils' proficiency is lower, or because a certain nostalgic element intrudes. Teachers say they miss the active participation and challenge of pupils in Muscat – discipline is less a problem in retrospect. Farah compares her experiences in two schools, one in the capital, the other in a rural region. “There is a big difference between the two schools. Here in the interior there are no class management problems. The girls are very quiet. I get to finish my lesson plan and the girls respect me and consider me a ‘real’ teacher. However, at the same time I miss the action and noise in the capital schools. I need some action in the class.”

5.2.1.2.3. Pupils, Discipline, Self-Confidence and Performance

Student teachers' concerns at this stage are predominantly to do with the adequacy of their pedagogic performances, (Fuller, 1969; Huberman, 1993) simultaneously they have concerns about their university performance. However, the main concern during TP is how well they can perform as teachers in front of pupils, university supervisors and co-operating teachers. Fawzia describes her feelings as a trainee very much in terms of such performance, and in terms not unlike those used in theatrical contexts. “I was scared and confused. I was trying my best to teach in a good way. I was very worried about my performance as a teacher” Perhaps this profound concern with performance at this stage is the main factor in the range of emotions they experience during their TP experiences. “Performance” adequacy involving controlling and involving pupils, getting through the lesson as planned, and maintaining an effective teacher-pupil relationship are important issues to trainees at this stage.

Most trainees talk about lack of confidence causing feelings of nervousness and confusion at the beginning of TP. They worry whether pupils will accept them; about maintaining self-image, and making mistakes in front of pupils. Farah describes her feelings on her first day. “I felt like a first grade pupil in her first day at school. I know the school environment but I felt like a new pupil. A stranger. I was scared as if it's the first time I enter a school.” This feeling is typical of most trainees, especially at their

first encounter with classes. That first encounter has a profound, formative effect on the entire TP experience (Sikes et al. 1985), and maybe beyond. Having a positive first teaching experience increases the trainee's self-confidence and helps her overcome fears by exhibiting to her that she indeed performed well as a teacher.

Trainees are naturally apprehensive when they teach. They feel that pupils, especially at the outset, evaluate them by comparing them to their "real teachers". Fear of being asked a question they cannot answer, or of failure to explain information, is prominent at this stage. This fear is in particular related to the nature of the subject taught. In the case of my sample, where English Language is the subject, high linguistic proficiency is an essential element of pedagogy. 86.4% of the trainees who responded to the questionnaire believed a high proficiency in English played a major role in competency. This puts further pressure on trainees, as they become more conscious about and concerned with their language proficiency: 50% of respondents agreed that being non-native English speakers causes them deep concern. Noaf sums up the fears of the performer, constantly under the critical eye of the class. "I was scared the pupils will have all their attention on me. I didn't want to make a mistake and they say I am not a good teacher. I was afraid they would judge me by saying I wasn't a good teacher." Self-confidence is linked directly to the ability to avoid mistakes and maintain what she might feel is the façade of proficiency. Safa seems to believe pupils will test the range of her pedagogic efficiency, and she was "...scared that a girl will ask me a question and I don't know its answer." However, in areas where the trainee is unknown, or where standards are not high, these pressures are considerably less. Noora explains that when she was training in a secondary school she was not worried, because " ... the school was in the outskirts of Muscat. We went there comfortable to know that it didn't have a reputation that the pupils were good in English. We weren't worried that some pupils will test or evaluate us." Trainees consider pupils' proficiency in English a determinant of how hard or easy their training would be. Pupils with high English language proficiency can pose a threat to trainees, whereas pupils with low proficiency can make the trainees confident – at least in one aspect of their teaching. In other words, trainees in general do not respond well to an intellectual challenge in these environments: they prefer to be encouraged by a clear demarcation between their own abilities and pupils'

ignorance. It is a simple paradigm, easy to maintain, but potentially pedagogically corrupting in the longer term.

Pupils play a crucial part in trainees' teaching experiences, either boosting or undermining self-confidence (this is further examined in chapter 7). Trainees are concerned about finding the best ways of dealing with pupils: as data from the questionnaire suggests, they find it difficult to address pupils' varying needs. 50% of trainee questionnaire respondents said that meeting the needs of the different levels and kinds of pupils was a problem at times, and 40.9% of respondents said they needed further training in this area. 40.9% of respondents said they needed training in recognising the social and emotional needs of pupils. Trainees, in general, are more sympathetic to the pupils, and do not consider they belong to the collegiate community where they train. Perhaps being students themselves, still learning, and with their own experiences as school pupils still fresh, is the reason for such sympathy. It should also be remembered that trainees are keenly aware of the temporary nature of their collegiate attachments. Trainees are emotionally rather than professionally attached.

Despite trainees' emotional attachment to their pupils, they are, generally, not concerned with their learning. In this research, trainees explained that they did not see pupils' learning as their responsibility, but rather the regular class teachers' duty. This is in line with Fuller's (1969) claim that trainees are not really concerned with their pupils' learning: instead they look at their classes as "training camps", where they train but do not teach – a realistic position since trainees only meet classes once weekly. Farah talks frankly about why she concentrates in class on good pupils. "... [W]eak pupils waste the class time. I will not be able to change a thing in one lesson a week. Helping weak pupils is the responsibility of the class teacher as she meets them daily. It would have been a different story if I were responsible for their learning for a whole semester." Farah raises an important issue with regard to teaching practice. Giving trainees the responsibility of a class for a continuous period can be the key to making them more connected to that class, and thus more concerned with "their" pupils' learning. Not doing so may sow the seeds of dangerous pedagogic practices in later years, when teachers could find themselves disconnected from their pupils.

Guillaume and Rudney (1993) articulate a trajectory for trainees in teaching practice, where initially trainees gauge pedagogy on the basis of pupils' enjoyment, and how well they are able to control those pupils; towards the end of the practice other concepts such as how much information is learnt and over what period are considered more important. For trainees, regardless of country, signs of success in class are predictably superficial: ability to finish the lesson on time, keep the class orderly and get pupils to enjoy the lesson are felt to be the main indicators of performance – in Oman trainees are evaluated specifically, though not exclusively, on keeping to the lesson plan and schedule. The effect on pupils of trainees' self-confidence and performance measured in such a way may not be great; the effect on trainees' concepts of pedagogy may be deeper and more extensive.

Being respected at school is also important to trainees – it increases self-confidence. Because trainees want pupils to accept and respect them as teachers, when this does not happen they may endure feelings of failure; some may take refuge in the use of a “limited” authority, becoming stricter (see 4.4), which could have adverse reactions from pupils. The majority of respondents opted for forming a kind of “friendship” with pupils, due to the age proximity factor. Training for only one day a week and not carrying responsibility for pupils' learning facilitates this. There are no deadlines to meet, no assignments to carry out, and no exams for which to prepare a class. Naturally, this changes when trainees become teachers responsible for pupils' learning, progress and success in the next phase, but there could well be a long term effect of formative pedagogic experiences. However during the early phase, trainees aim to gain their pupils' emotional attachment (see chapter 7), a strategy fruitful in many cases but only for short-term gain.

One interesting response may have more to do with a certain amount of awkwardness or disingenuousness than truthfulness. Although 40.9% of trainees stated, in the questionnaire, that they are dissatisfied by disrespectful pupils and 72.7% by unmotivated pupils more than any other group of respondents (an indicator of the central role pupils play in trainees' TP), they generally claimed that discipline or class management do not pose much of a problem, contrary to a significant body of literature suggesting that these aspects of TP are likely to concern and be troublesome for

trainees. (Veenman, 1984; Capel, 1998; Johnson, 1994; Guillaume and Rudney, 1993 and Kyriacou and Stephens, 1999) Although 63.6% of the questionnaire respondents said that keeping discipline in the classroom is a problem at times, and 31.8% said that they needed some training in this area, oddly, they refused to accord keeping discipline the status of “major problem” (see 4.4). There may be different factors that come into play to produce this result (see 5.2.2.5), but the most important could be that answers to questions central to the basic functioning of pedagogy will be fudged. This still allows some respondents to admit milder types of problems, such as pupils who talk during class, and then appropriating a suitably superficial reason for such pupil behaviour. Trainees facing discipline problems seem to believe it is the result of pupils viewing them as “trainees”, not “real teachers”. “They know I am a trainee and the lesson I give them they think is just for fun. They believe it is ok whether they attend or not because there are no grades. They don’t take me seriously.” (Noor) There is a frequent denial of any deeper causes for discipline inadequacies, but honesty is not absent from all respondents.

I was shocked to see the girls act in the way they did. They never sat properly, always talking especially the ones in the back rows. They didn’t pay attention to what I was saying. I felt I wasn’t good enough. They treated me like a trainee and didn’t respect me. I had difficulty controlling the class. This made me feel defeated and frustrated. It made me feel useless. My relationship with the pupils wasn’t very good. I used to always shout at them in class because they were impolite. (Fawzia)

Yasmin was looking forward to the experience of TP. She was enthusiastic, and had many constructive ideas, but was clearly hampered by the inadequacy of her training.

I couldn’t get on with them. I didn’t know how to deal with the pupils. My training didn’t contain this important aspect. I had many problems with the pupils. I started to be very strict with them but it didn’t work. I knew I didn’t have any real authority on them but I hated the way they thought about my lessons. It was, to them, time to be wasted playing. I wanted them to know that I needed their help so they can benefit from my teaching. (Yasmin)

These feelings of anxiety slowly disappear as trainees get to know the pupils and gain confidence in their abilities to teach. Most trainees report that at first they were more scared of facing a large number of pupils than of teaching itself, but experience

increases versatility and confidence.

I have more confidence. I got used to things. I can explain the lesson. I can act quickly in difficult situations in class. Once, one of my pupils got very sick in class and I had to act quickly. Another time, one of my colleagues took my visual aids but I was able to modify the lesson accordingly.” (Shama)

The speed at which different trainees overcome early feelings of inadequacy differs as a result of several factors: the nature of the first teaching experience, the amount and nature of feedback received from the cooperating teacher, the amount and nature of feedback received from the university supervisor, the relationship with the pupils, the overall school environment, and the trainee’s personality and adequacy for teaching.

5.2.1.2.4. Supervisors

Over 70% of trainee questionnaire respondents agreed or strongly agreed that one of their main concerns at the early teaching concerns stage is getting a good evaluation of their performance from supervisors. Farah frankly admitted she took extra care in preparation and planning, and used visual aids when her supervisor came to her class, because she wanted a good evaluation. Yasmin articulated heightened stress on being observed during training. “My concern with my performance increases when my supervisor or anybody else comes to observe my teaching.” Trainees were found to be the group most likely to seek advice from their supervisors (see 4.4). Trainees see, as an important role of a university supervisor, the provision of encouragement and advice: praise and positive evaluation are perceived to be key ingredients for trainees’ stamina and morale. 45.5% of trainee questionnaire respondents said they were satisfied when their efforts are recognised by their university supervisors (see 4.7.1). This nurturing aspect of supervisors’ work is very much valued by trainees, and plays a significant role in their pedagogical learning and development, (Hauge, 2000) but whether Omani trainees receive it, or if they do in what quantity and quality, are other issues.

Supervisors’ efficacy is closely related to the relevance of university courses to classroom reality – and it needs to be recognised that supervision and general instruction are intimately related, and not only because these aspects of teacher training are conducted by the same people. Initial training is usually criticised for not being

sufficiently related to the classroom environment. (Coste, 1983 and Grenfell, 1996) Supervision and general training may well be infected by the same problems. Training programmes need to "... put forth a realistic view of teaching that recognises the realities of classroom life and adequately prepares pre-service teachers to cope with those realities." (Johnson, 1996 cited by Flowerdew, 1999:144) The difference between what is learned during pre-service programmes and what is required from them in the schools becomes more evident when they start their careers.

The education courses we took at the university are not related in any way to the reality of our schools. ... [T]he instructor brought us video tapes to watch and explained the different teaching methods we can use, but it is hard to implement this in school for different reasons such as being restricted by the curriculum and having a large number of pupils in class. (Farah)

This illustrates the need to relate courses to the context within which trainees are most likely to work: new teachers should be encouraged to learn strategies related to real situations. Trainees need advice, direction and useful pedagogic hints. All the interviewees said they needed somebody to care about and encourage them. They said they needed someone to listen to them as they embarked on new experiences, and these needs were articulated with statements such as "I needed somebody to advise me" or "I wished there were somebody to advise me". These experiences can have a lasting effect on their future career as teachers. The university supervisor, who in the case of my respondents came twice a term, perhaps should not be the only person responsible for so many trainees.

Some of the difficulties the interviewees identified are related to the school environment: trainees said it did not cater for their professional development. This, in their opinion, was due to the lack of cooperation between school administration, teachers, university supervisors and the trainees themselves. There were no training rules or responsibilities given these various parties, and too much depended on individual personalities and their efforts. Myint's (1999) study of Japanese novice teachers' perceptions of their initial training programmes found a similar lack of cooperation between schools and universities in teacher education, and more collaboration between training institutions and schools is suggested to "... [improve] initial training so that prospective teachers will be able to meet changes in school and

the society when they become teachers.” (ibid: 26) Other research (Elliot, 1991; Grenfell, 1996 and Day, 1997) also calls for a partnership between higher education and schools.

5.2.2. Stage Two: The Novitiate Stage

“Each new teacher enters the classroom more or less as a stranger in a strange land. The suitcases he or she carries are filled with articles from the old country, the familiar land just left.”

(Copa, 1991: 191, cited in Carre, 1993)

This is the time new young teachers are appointed. They are starting a new phase in their lives, what Levinson et al. (1978) call “entering the adult world”, as they step into the first stage of their careers. The very idea that they hold a job carries a new perception of self as responsible and mature: whatever the age of novitiates, they all experience similar feelings when they teach for the first time. They also become part of a system, expected to follow certain rules and have certain responsibilities, something they may not have imagined. For the first time in their lives they are on a different team in the school setting – no longer pupils, they are now on “the other side of the desk”. This has also been labelled “the early teaching phase” (Fuller, 1969), “career entry” (Huberman, 1993), “induction” (Christensen and Fessler, 1992), and “launching a career: initial commitment” (Day, 1999), the variety of the nomenclature suggesting the novitiate phase is complex.

The experience of the first year teacher is unique - an intense period of learning and change, exhausting emotionally, mentally and physically. Two main areas of concern for new teachers are dealing with pupils and planning and teaching lessons. (Abdullah-Sani, 2000) Support, guidance and encouragement are key factors for a smooth entry and future development. Research into novitiate experiences is needed because, beside offering better understanding of the development process, it assists in planning future teacher training programmes and establishing more effective school-based induction programmes for novices.

5.2.2.1. Emotional Concerns

The feelings and degree of commitment a new teacher experiences are closely related, in this study, to the extent to which they initially wanted to become teachers. For many, the novitiate is a happy moment ending years of studying and hard work – the achievement of a dream; for others it can mean the opposite. The majority of teachers I interviewed expressed satisfaction in finally making it. Some are happy to find a job that enables them to support their families; others are happy because they made their families proud; still others believe becoming a teacher granted them a social identity. However, there were those who felt teaching was not what they wanted, either because they had not chosen the career, or because they found out too late teaching was not what they wanted to do: these showed doubts in their abilities to commit to a life-long career.

Many teachers, including those who are not totally happy to become teachers, talk about feelings of pride in becoming teachers. This is not exactly similar to the previous group, since here the identifying feature is that they relate feelings of contentment to a sense of pride: novices are proud for attaining the respect of pupils and others both inside and outside the collegiate setting. Yasmin is clear about her feelings as a novice – “It’s a beautiful feeling. I was over the moon.” Asma expresses her pride in herself, and her pride in attaining the respect of her family. “I was proud of myself and my family was also proud of me. I was finally a teacher after many years of studying.” Fawzia shares the same feelings, but there is already a warning note regarding later experiences. “At the beginning I was happy with the job and the salary. I was proud of myself especially among my family as I was the first teacher in the family.” Amina articulates her need for and pride in social and familial recognition.

I was finally a teacher especially since teachers have a good reputation in our society. My family was happy for me and proud of me especially that I was the first girl to graduate from university in my family. This was reflected on me as I felt happy, satisfied and proud because my family were feeling that way about me.

As is the case in other Middle Eastern and Arab societies (Hijab, 1988), family is an important contextual element. In a way, because some social structures such as child and elderly care institutions are weaker, and the linked political structures newer, and

both perhaps either less understood or less respected than those of the West, the importance of family approbation is exaggerated. Also the ideological component of Islam as the dominant religion should be understood: maintaining and cultivating strong family ties, which may mean an element of self-abandonment, is one of the strongest religious tenets. Clearly these are twin, interlinked socio-cultural determinants of action; however, they by no means guarantee satisfaction as I have already observed. The more an individual defines themselves as part of a group – family, religion – the more that group must play an active role in sustaining and nurturing that individual: if the group simply acts as a *reason* for action, rather than as a *partner* in action, it is very likely that dissatisfaction will result. It is clear that factors such as these, however strongly culturally embedded in the individual, must also meet with those newer socio-cultural factors engendered by experiences of modernity.

Initial feelings of happiness result, in most cases, in the excitement and enthusiasm of the novice. Being young (in most cases) and coming fresh from university, they are, generally speaking, active, motivated and enthusiastic. Many teachers talk about enthusiasm more than happiness. Asma remembers how dynamic she was during her first year as a teacher: again, there is a poignant, nostalgic element here. “Enthusiasm! I was very enthusiastic during the first year.” Khulood expresses similar explicit and implicit emotions. “The first year was something different. I was a nuclear bomb full of enthusiasm and energy.” Noora is a new teacher who talks about her feelings before starting her job. “I was so keen to start teaching. I found the summer holiday before the start of the new academic year so long.” Perhaps this enthusiasm is what enables novices to endure the intense learning and work period of the first year.

The main difference between trainees and novice teachers is that the latter have significant responsibilities. The abruptness with which full responsibility is given to novices is a characteristic of the profession (Lortie, 1975), and the transition from university student to teacher leaves little time to adjust emotionally and mentally. This can be a major factor among the range of difficulties novices face in the early stages of their careers. My research indicates that the training programme the sample followed, placed little emphasis on key practical aspects of teaching. This is a serious consideration when a novice is responsible for classes in the absence of experienced

colleagues. Being the only teacher at preparatory level in her first year, the pressure felt is clear for one novitiate.

... I was the only teacher teaching preparatory level students. I didn't have any experienced teacher to consult. There was an experienced EFL elementary teacher whom I occasionally asked for advice but she didn't help me much. I used to ask the other teachers in the school about other things like how to deal with pupils. Not having someone with experience to consult has affected me a lot. I needed such a person during my first year. (Faten)

Sara was in a similar situation when, as a new teacher, she was asked to teach third preparatory, the highest level in the school, considered, at that time, general certificate level.

I was very scared. I spent more time making extra material for the pupils. I was conscious I was responsible for the pupils' success. It was a general certificate. It was like a nightmare to me. There was no teacher with experience to consult. That would have helped a lot. I knew I could do it but it caused me a lot of emotional pressure.

For most novices, the first year is a period of survival and discovery (Huberman, 1992; Nias, 1989) – 64.2% of the questionnaire sample described their initiation into teaching as a year of discovery, whereas 88.9% of the novice respondents described their current situation as teachers by selecting “I am still discovering a lot of things about teaching and pupils”. The discovery element of the new experience may help the novice endure (Huberman, 1993) Lortie (1975) calls the first months in teaching a “private ordeal”, as novices struggle alone to adjust to new roles. Much research has documented novices' concerns with classroom survival (Burden, 1990; Nias, 1989 and Sikes, 1985 and Katz, 1972), when the immediate concern for most is “coping and being seen to be able to cope, with the job itself”. (Sikes, Measor and Woods, 1985: 27) With little support novices either sink or swim, and become anxious about classroom performance. Many do not feel confident or secure in their pedagogy: they are under pressure and work hard to prove themselves. “I was very worried as if I carried all the world's problems on my shoulders. It was like a test to prove oneself. I felt everybody was laughing and enjoying their time except me. Nobody was feeling what I was going through.” (Asma) This sense of isolation is unique to the novitiate. Moza remembers how she needed to rehearse outside the school environment. “Yes I was concerned about my performance.

During my first year I used to act my lessons at home. I did that for the first month and a half. I used to extensively prepare for every task and step and write it down. Now I don't do that."

Many teachers say they were, at the outset, somewhat more concerned with how they performed than whether pupils understood lessons. However, they quickly come to realise that performance and pupils' understanding are related. Concern for pupils' understanding stems from a concern for performance – if pupils understand the lesson and actively participate, this suggests effective teaching. Pupils' good test results and progress reinforce novices' confidence. 55.6% of novice questionnaire respondents said they experienced satisfaction "when you feel pupils understood what you were trying to explain", while 50% said that "seeing pupils' good test results" gave them career satisfaction. All interviewees expressed happiness at pupils' progress – Yasmin typically expresses how pupils' success impacts on performance. "My pupils' success, their high grades, when they talk to me using English vocabulary that I have taught them. It makes me feel that they indeed learned something from me and this increases my self-confidence." Perhaps novices work harder to get their pupils to achieve well in their exams because their pupils' successes will reflect positively on how the school administration and their colleagues will perceive them.

5.2.2.2. Easy versus Painful Novitiates: "Reality Shock"

According to Sikes et al. (1985), the first 18 months in teaching are critical in the lives of teachers. Although "critical" was not explained by the authors, my research shows this period does indeed influence teachers' career development. A positive or an easy outset to a teaching career, or, alternatively, a negative or painful outset (Day, 1999) can have lasting effects on novices' future careers. The research relates easy and painful beginnings, in most cases, to novices' desire, or lack of desire, to teach. In the case of there being no desire to teach, survival becomes the dominant aspect to pedagogy, and this makes life difficult for the novice. Two novices whose initiatory periods were difficult reported intense resentment against the profession – Meera and Heba are in their first years; both became teachers because there was no alternative and both

experienced “hatred” for teaching from the start, and currently are not satisfied with their careers.

“If I am given the chance again, I will study English literature in the college of arts even if it means that I wouldn’t be able to find a job when I graduate. The most important thing is that I don’t become a teacher. I accepted the idea now but it’s not because I am happy with it. It’s just because I am forced to accept it. I haven’t the slightest hope of finding another job. Now I am trying to help my little sister so this won’t happen to her.” (Meera)

Meera loves the English language, and wanted to study it, but was advised by her family to choose the College of Education instead of the College of Arts. Their justification was that graduates of the College of Education could get a job immediately after graduation because there was a great demand for teachers in Oman, whereas graduates of other colleges would have to wait until they found a suitable job. She followed familial advice: during the four college years her performances were poor; she did not enjoy her micro-teaching sessions or TP because “... I didn’t have the desire to be a teacher; therefore, I couldn’t give [offer myself] in teaching.”

Heba’s case is similar: she became a teacher despite a lack of vocation. However, the reasons behind her choice are different. As the elder daughter of a poor family, she was conscious of her family’s need for financial help. She chose to study in the College of Education because the programme is short, and she wanted to start work quickly and support her family. She regrets her choice now, and will leave teaching as soon as she finds a better job.

I wasn’t planning to teach. I thought of looking for any other job, but my relatives and friends advised me against that. They said that I might have to wait for up to three years to find a job. I thought about what they said and found that they were right. I live in a small town and job opportunities for women are few. When I arrived at the school the first day I couldn’t stay for more than one hour. I went back home and didn’t go to work for the following two days. My family didn’t know what was wrong and they thought I had a problem with the school administration. They didn’t know that I didn’t like the job itself. Finally, I went to school the fourth day. At the beginning I felt lonely and like a stranger. I was scared I wouldn’t be able to control myself. Everything was forced on me: studying and work. Now things are a bit better.

Both Meera and Heba went through a cycle of resentment, attempting to adjust and finally giving in during their first months teaching. Teachers who experience an initial “painful” or stressful novitiate into teaching might follow different development paths. Some might adopt a negative attitude, regard teaching as just a salary and wait for the first opportunity to leave. Others might want to change career if a suitable opportunity came along, but at the same time they try to do their job as best as they can. Still others just accept their “destiny” (as some teachers refer to it) and try to foster a positive attitude, and even start to enjoy teaching. Different people react differently, but my research finds that the majority of Omani female teachers, perhaps because of the enthusiasm and energy typical of this early career stage, and knowing there is little likelihood of a career other than teaching, accept their “destiny” and try to enjoy teaching. Pride in achievement may act to help in this acquiescence to fate.

Enduring a “reality shock” is another characteristic of novices’ experiences (Sikes et al., 1985). Novices may experience it when their pedagogy is built solely on the basis of their experiences as pupils. Many face the reality of teaching for the first time despite training in schools for the final terms of the pre-service programme. The reality of teaching, for the majority of novices, is very different from the ideals they had before experiencing teaching. The first year in a teacher’s life is a critical period, during which she examines her pedagogic ideology in relation to the reality of teaching. She may maintain, modify or change her ideas based on this practical experience. The majority of respondents admitted teaching was not what they had expected (see 4.4)

As a pupil I never felt that the teacher gets tired. She would be standing up for 40 minutes and if she sat for 5 minutes we used to say “she sat during class”. If she looked at her book as she teaches, we’d say “she didn’t prepare the lesson”, if we asked her a question and she wasn’t able to provide an answer, we’d say “she wasn’t a good enough teacher”. ... We had an idea that a teacher must know everything about her subject otherwise she is not a good teacher. Now, I frankly feel sorry for all my former teachers. We used to never appreciate their work. But now I do – now that I am going through the same thing.” (Noora)

After three years teaching Amina seems sad as she talks about how energetic and full of hope and ideas she was when she started – the shock she experienced is one of profound disappointment.

As a new teacher I came to school full of ideas about teaching. I brought with me even the visual aids that I made during the teaching practice. I was enthusiastic and wanted to implement the same things we learned at the university. However, we didn't get any encouragement to do so either from the school administration or even the pupils. I was shocked with reality and felt very frustrated ... I was shocked with the reality of teaching. I had rosy dreams and many ideas ...

Such an experience is repeated in the experiences of novice teachers around the world (Johnson, 1994), and novices of any profession find a difference between the ideal and the real. Perhaps more in vocational professions, novices dream about their abilities to make a difference. Other research (McCullough and Mintz, 1992) reports the shock novices experience because of the constraints of reality. Novices go through a process of re-examining personal pedagogic beliefs developed on the basis of experience as pupils, or what Lortie (1975) calls the "apprenticeship of observation" during their pre-service training programme and their limited practical experience during teaching practice. (Johnson, 1994; Mok, 1994; Day, 1993, Raymond, Butt and Townsen, 1992 and Britten, 1988) The process can be shocking.

I discovered reality. The pupils do not encourage you. The subject, which I thought was well liked by our pupils, I discovered was amongst the most difficult and disliked Exams, marking and many other things our training didn't include. There were other things to do besides teaching lessons; there were activities and administrative work in addition to being responsible for a class. We had to learn all of this during our first year. They shocked us from the first year. The problem there was no time to learn because I had only one teaching-free hour a day. (Haya)

Haya's experience is typical of most Omani novices, because the training programme – which gives the school community the chance to exercise greater influence over novices – does not prepare them adequately for pedagogic realities. One aggravation is the lack of any support system for newly appointed teachers. This results in negative effects, such as novices taking longer to make the transition from student teacher to teacher. These important issues will be examined next.

5.2.2.3. Novices' Need for Encouragement and Guidance in the Collegiate Environment

Based on a review of the literature on the problems facing new teachers, Veenman, Denessen, Gerrits and Kenter (2001) conclude that the number of problems novices face indicate a need for support and help. 36.8% of the novice questionnaire respondents described their experience as “confusing” (see 4.4) In addition, 22.2% said they felt lost and 44.4% said they needed guidance but did not from where to get it. Almost all interviewees, whether “easy beginners” or “painful beginners” (Day, 1999), report that they are in need of encouragement and guidance at the start of their careers. Interviewees elaborated passionately on this point: they emphasized over and over their immense need for guidance and support during their first year, and that this was why they sought assurance from others – especially inspectors and colleagues. Meera was very anxious about her performance, feeling she lacked confidence in herself as a teacher.

I don't have much confidence in myself as a teacher although I am more confident than I was at the beginning of the year. When I first started teaching, I asked some of my colleagues to come and observe me. I felt I needed others to evaluate my performance at the beginning, but now I evaluate myself and I feel I am completely different than when I have started last term. I feel comfortable discussing things with other teachers so that I get more ideas and benefit from them.

Meera needed others with “validating capabilities” (Nias, 1989), in this case colleagues with longer teaching experience, to allow her to build an objective pedagogic perspective, and confirm her own ability to survive in a classroom. Where these capabilities are not present, the majority of interviewees complained about the “lack of trust” in their abilities and the tendency for others, such as school administration and experienced colleagues, to underestimate them. This has a negative effect on their morale. Amani sees this lack of trust as patronizing and demeaning. “During our first and second years in teaching we were under observation. They considered us beginners as if we don't understand a thing in teaching and anything we do is not satisfactory for them even if it were right!” Bushra, a teacher in her second year, articulates lack of appropriate validation as underestimation; her colleagues “underestimated me. They thought I didn't know anything yet.” Despite this lack of confidence, and needing to

prove themselves, novices work hard during their first year. 40% of questionnaire respondents described their first year as “exhausting”, while almost all the interviewed teachers reported that their first year was the most tiring of their career, when most had to learn on the job. Most of the hard work falls in the preparation stage, as 44.4% of novice questionnaire respondents reported: 42.9% said they “always” spend more time and effort in planning and preparing lessons. In most cases, they take work home. The effort can be telling.

“I lost weight during my first year in teaching. I had 4 classes and taught 20 hours a week. I needed strength and effort to be able to finish the textbook on time. I used to take extra classes As a teacher I was like someone who things were not clear in front of her eyes. I used to ask myself would I be able to finish on time, I used to panic when a teacher says she was about to finish. I was scared.” (Aseel)

This apprehension may not be unusual among novices, but without the necessary encouragement and guidance, it is likely that exhaustion will deepen, and affect pedagogy.

The school environment has an influential role in the lives of novices who are particularly subject to its powerful socialisation forces (Day, 1999), in particular exercised by colleagues and the school administration. The scholastic environment and its practices have a greater impact than previous environments (Fanselow, 1983), and the sample made clear its effect on them as teachers – in particular, they spoke of the negative effects on motivation. Professional and moral support are two key requirements for new teachers’ development: many novices reported it was difficult to work in an environment where they were used or ignored. Noora says the school administration “never asks us [novices] what we need. They don’t encourage us either. In fact, they are not even interested in the subject we teach.” Bushra describes her relationships with colleagues during her first year in terms of avoidance rather than engagement: she used to avoid asking for advice because “they didn’t encourage me to. Actually, they didn’t care.” Haya remembers her own experience in terms of a lack of encouragement from those in the school or outside it: “the only encouragement they gave me was more responsibilities and more work. In fact, they weren’t encouraging me; they were using me!”

The importance novices attach to support from others in the school is intensified by a lack of formal induction or support systems for them: they depend on “influential others” for support, but this reliance is not always to the novice’s benefit since it depends on individual choices and, often, pure luck. The nature of pedagogy means teachers spend most time in the classroom away from colleagues (Lortie, 1975 and Somech and Drach-Zahavy, 2000), a lonely existence which limits opportunities to meet and consult – and this in turn limits the support important for teacher development (Flowerdew, 1999 and Herbert and Worthy, 2001). Induction arrangements are influential in the development of professional bonding and involvement (Yee, 1990), and Weiss (1999) maintains that ignoring new teachers’ “unique” enthusiasm and commitment results in “initial teachable moments [becoming] lost learning opportunities”. (ibid: 871) Many novices talk of feelings of neglect and say that, though they work hard, efforts are not appreciated.

Nobody cares about the teacher as a human being. When you work hard and use some new ideas in teaching, nobody cares or appreciates your efforts. When the pupils’ level raises they don’t put it back to the teacher’s efforts but to the pupils’ hard work. However, if the pupils’ level is down it is always the teacher to blame! (Meera)

Most say they did not receive the necessary encouragement, and suggest that this results in their working less hard because they found out early on that this would be irrelevant to their own pedagogic development. The effect this has on the effectiveness of pedagogy itself over a teaching career may be considerable.

Many novices understand quite quickly that, because they are new, they are easily manipulated by the school administration: given classes other teachers do not want, with timetables much more gruelling than their more experienced colleagues’. As teachers gain experience, they themselves use newer teachers, a passing down of pedagogic dysfunction in an almost hereditary manner, which embeds and perpetuates, rather than dissipates, abuse.

When I came to the school I discovered that they treat new teachers like fools. They tell us to go right we go right, they tell us to go left we go left. They treat us like substitution teachers so when a teacher is on a maternity leave they ask us to take her classes. If another is absent then we are the ones to cover for her. They

move us from one level to another as they wish and we just agree. I was like a good little girl always listening to what they tell me. (Maha)

Despite complaints about the lack of support or interest in their development, those few lucky ones who are nurtured and encouraged may face fewer short and long-term difficulties. “My relationship with the school administration was strong. The principal cared about us and encouraged us. She used to attend some of my lessons and encourage the pupils to interact with me in the classroom.” (Faten)

Encouragement is the keystone of any sense of belonging, and belonging to the school community is a basic need for novices. (Fessler, 1995) My research indicates teachers place considerable emphasis on feeling part of the team – more even than having co-operative colleagues. Over time, relationships with other members of staff obscure basic pedagogic needs, evident from interviewees’ comments about relationships with colleagues – the majority of novices place an emphasis on how others made them, or failed to make them, feel part of the group, and suggested this may have a direct impact on professional development and job satisfaction. “My relationship with my colleagues is very good. They are very co-operative and would help me even without me asking them. They made me feel part of the group and nobody makes me feel I am new. This good relationship ... makes me feel satisfied with my job.” (Aneesa)

5.2.2.4. Teacher Manuals and Inspectors

An important point is novices’ strict adherence to teacher manuals provided with the national textbooks they teach (see 4.4). With encouragement from inspectors and the educational authorities to “just follow the teachers’ book”, many novices find sticking to the guidelines provided “comforting”. Perhaps, considering the lack of proper guidance and encouragement outlined already, a manual is simply the next best thing. However, reliance on a written code removes adaptive elements from pedagogy. The majority, though they mention that they would have liked to use their own teaching strategies, confessed they felt more secure doing what the manual told them. They attributed this to their lack of experience which made them insecure about using their own methods. Since the textbooks and the teachers’ manuals are written by “experts” who novices readily – perhaps too readily – acknowledge for their extensive knowledge

of pupils' levels, what had been learned in previous years and the best ways to teach, the manuals attain a specious intellectual and ideological convenience for those struggling through their first year. Maha remembers how rigorously she used to follow the teacher manual during her novitiate. "I myself wanted to read every word in the teacher's book. It was very important for me to do so because I felt I had no experience even with my teaching practice experience." She expresses an urgency to fill a gap left by poor supervision. Other teachers agree that they needed the security manuals provide during their novitiate. Yasmin acknowledges the manual as security blanket. "The teacher manual provides me with security because I lack experience." Aseel suggests the manual is a way to increase confidence. "One needs the manual during the first year until one gains enough self-confidence to free herself." The limits of pedagogy with its roots in a manual are clear, yet the reliance is also understandable in this context. There are some novices who admit they found the book limiting, but their inspectors' insistence and "traditional" pedagogic practice stood in their way of their using their own ideas.

He used to ask me to adhere to the teachers' book ... even the ideas he used to give me were so old and traditional not suitable for today's teaching. We were opposites: I was unconfined and I wanted to use my ideas with enthusiasm, and he used to come up with traditional ideas that I didn't believe in. (Khulood)

Clearly, a manual is no neutral alternative to proper guidance, but a strongly conservative and sometimes stifling force. The long-term effects of such practice are hard to determine since many factors influence novices' experiences. However, excessive reliance on teacher manuals might discourage a teacher from looking for creative pedagogic strategies. It reinforces teacher dependency and can affect to a large extent teacher autonomy. After four years in teaching, Noaf explains how her experience of sticking to the teacher's manual during the first year influenced her teaching.

I didn't want to follow the teacher's book but my inspector then used to ask me to follow the instructions in the teacher's manual. It was a total change of what we learned at university. He told me that I had to change all my teaching strategies. He used to ask me to follow the teacher's book step by step. I remember this very well. He used to tell me that I needed the teacher's book

because I was still new. I got used to following the teacher's book although I could make some minor changes. I became traditional in my teaching.

Inspectors should be aware of the danger of encouraging novices simply to follow the manual; new, younger inspectors, especially those with their own recent teaching experience to draw on, are aware of this, and some teachers mentioned that working with inspectors who wanted to move away from reliance on the manual was interesting and productive. Faten, explains how grateful she was to have her British inspector during her novitiate.

I learned a lot from him. ... He used not to care so much about my preparation plan as much as what I actually did in class. He used to discuss things with me and give me ideas. He used to be interested in the essence of the lesson. He used not to encourage me to follow the teacher's manual, which made me take just ideas from it instead of strictly following everything it said. I used to try and follow the teaching strategies I learned at the university.

It may be that, in the developmental context, there is an interesting tension between a reliance on static formulae such as manuals, and the much more valuable exploitation of human resources. This could reflect socio-political stresses created between the older habits of reliance or even obedience, and the rapid growth of a younger generation with different and more creative attitudes. Such problems need to be resolved before those scarce and valuable resources are properly utilized. Resolution is unlikely to occur without wider socio-political changes.

5.2.2.5. Maintaining Discipline

Discipline causes novices considerable anxiety (Veenman, 1984; Sikes et al. 1985, and Cooke and Pang, 1991) – without the natural authority that comes with age and experience, new teachers have to find ways to keep pupils on track. Pupils always try to “test” new teachers, to discover personality peculiarities and how far they can push them. Novices are aware of this, and to obviate it try to befriend pupils, as is the case with the majority of teachers in my research. Their attempts to establish a rapport with pupils was, in the majority of cases, welcomed by pupils and 72% of novice questionnaire respondents stated that establishing a good relationship with pupils was not a problem (see 4.4). Interviewees occasionally talked about their fears of discipline

problems at the beginnings of their careers, nor did any report major incidents – only 5.6% of novice questionnaire respondents cited discipline as a major problem. This finding, different as it is from the findings of other similar studies, is largely attributable to contextual factors.

An Omani teacher remains a figure with authority, and this may be partly because teaching is still a respected profession. 35.3% of novice questionnaire respondents reported that they “always” use their authority to control their classes, 47.1% said they use it “sometimes”. (see 4.4) This power they did not have as trainees, but once they are “real” teachers, they possess and exert authority. Pupils are expected to respect and obey teachers, and misbehaviour is considered antisocial. In this context, despite having “mild” problems of control, especially linked with older pupils, the sample never talked about any serious discipline problems. 50% of novice questionnaire respondents said that keeping discipline in the classroom was no problem at all; 33.3% said it was a problem at times only (see 4.4). Gender plays its role, since females face stronger social constraints to behaviour: disrespect for teachers may affect a girl’s reputation. Since state schools remain single sex, this may also be an influence on the severity of discipline problems reported in my research – girls seem to demonstrate fewer behavioural difficulties for teachers than boys, though this may simply displace disruptive behaviour into male schools, or create different patterns of non-compliance. On the other hand, the nature of eastern societies in contrast to western societies encourages heavy dependence on the teacher in the learning process. This dependence means that the learner is in need of the teacher. This need in turn necessitates that the learner and the teacher have a good relationship based to a large extent on respect, as the teacher is believed to be the ‘owner of knowledge’. Religion remains influential with respect to attitudes to teachers: teachers, in Islam, carry out a socially valuable task which entitles them to respect.

5.2.3. Stage Three: The Maturation Phase

The speed at which teachers move through the next career phase is largely influenced by their initiation. Teachers’ career stages are not clearly demarcated; they are, rather, evolutionary phases through which they pass. The maturation phase is mainly

characterized by increasing self-confidence and gradual extension of pedagogic repertoire. The general picture of a teacher at this phase is that of someone who is relaxed, confident, seeking knowledge, experimenting, enjoying teaching, but starting to get into a routine that may threaten boredom. Katz (1972) calls this the “consolidation stage”, Huberman (1992) the “stabilization phase”, Christensen and Fessler (1992) the “competency building stage” and Day (1999) the “stabilization: final commitment phase”. This is a learning period during which teachers experiment with and refine their pedagogy: they are under less pressure to prove their adequacy to themselves and others.

It is easier to talk about the initial two phases in teachers’ careers than the later ones, where greater diversity is created as different factors – such as society, gender and educational context – grow in influence on teachers’ professionalism and commitment. The questionnaire data was not as helpful as the interviews in yielding evidence relevant to the third and fourth phases. This may be because the design of the questionnaire did not fully reflect the defining features of these stages, and there are, in any case, limitations in the use of questionnaires in social science research (see 3.9.1). Also, research to date has mostly concentrated on trainees and novices, and there is not much information about more experienced teachers. It was therefore difficult to construct questionnaire items to generate such information.

5.2.3.1. Emotional Experiences

Teachers at the maturation phase experience emotional changes. Some are positive, such as increased self-confidence and enjoyment of teaching; some are negative, such as a decline in enthusiasm, and feelings of boredom. The majority of interviewees report that they are less enthusiastic about teaching than during their first year – partly due to the novelty wearing off, getting acquainted with the reality of teaching or being influenced by colleagues’ scepticism and pessimistic attitudes. Teachers are aware of the decline in their motivation and enthusiasm and many attribute it to external factors such as pupils’ poor results or lack of motivation, a discouraging school environment or a rigid curriculum - by the end of this phase teachers, generally, are on their way to reaching a professional plateau, and for many the desire to quit rises. The statistical

analysis of the questionnaire data revealed a high association ($p < .01$) between teaching experience and teachers' desire to quit (see 4.8.2).

There is a big difference between me as a teacher now and how I used to be during the first year. At the beginning I was very enthusiastic, willing to give and I had hoped that my pupils would learn and improve. Now I got used to the fact that only few in the class will understand the lessons. I had an ideal idea that all the pupils will understand the lesson, but now no matter how hard one works some pupils will just never learn and unfortunately these are the majority in the class. (Safa)

Her statement shows a low sense of “general efficacy” – “the belief that the ‘normative teacher’ or ‘an abstract collection of teachers’ are capable of delivering skilful instruction that overcome the negative effects of an impoverished home environment” (Coladarci and Breton, 1997 cited by Ghaith and Shaaban, 1999: 488), and there is a sense of comfortable complacency, which Ghaith and Shaaban (ibid: 494) maintain is true of “teachers with a low sense of general efficacy”, a complacency which fits with colleagues' perceptions that it is better to admit the failure of earlier more idealistic pedagogic concepts, and which produces the positive result of less “stress or dissatisfaction” for the teacher. Safa's comments illustrate not only a corruption of earlier energy, but also of the ideologies that energy helped express. This period must therefore, logically, lead not only to a period of comfortable complacency, but a change in pedagogic philosophy, which neatly fits with that of most colleagues. The implicit change of the maturation phase may be characterized as a simplification and, perhaps, absorption of personal concepts into the easier, more comfortable ideologies of the wider group, not unlike that equated with maturation more generally.

Not all teachers follow this trajectory. For some there is a sense of dislocation and frustration as they feel they are more and more emotionally distanced from the job, and are in need of external help to prevent the stagnation others embrace.

I wish somebody would care about us so that we won't lose the enthusiasm we started off with. I wish the school administration and the ministry organized some courses and workshops for us. They are killing our enthusiasm and making teaching a routine job. I wish there were somebody to take care of us and follow our development. I have ideas, which I cannot implement, and energy that is getting less and less, year after year. I imagine myself after few years fed up

with teaching. Whenever one gets bored with their work, one will not be able to give as much as one wants. (Amina)

This *cri de couer* may be more usual among those who feel a strong initial vocation which defines their personalities, who see their colleagues drifting into complacency and sense that this would, for them, be an abandonment of self, almost an act of treachery – however convenient.

These early years are mainly a learning phase: 68.3% of the respondents (teachers with 1 to 6 years teaching experience) said that they are still discovering a lot of things about pedagogy. It is during this period in their careers that most experimentation takes place, if the opportunity is available, and teachers develop their deepest pedagogic philosophies that underlie practice, and refine and extend basic skills. Fawzia expresses the typical attitude to learning through practical experience. “One learns from ones’ mistakes. I try things out with my pupils.” She admits that while “trying things” she makes mistakes, but is quick to add that such mistakes are useful to learn from. Bushra, in her second year, expresses new levels of confidence and a willingness to depart from the demands of the manuals: she feels “...confident to bring in new ideas and material, but at the same time [I] follow the textbook instructions but teach in different ways.”

Although learning does take place, teachers report having less work pressure than during their first years, when they needed to learn a lot in a short period to do their duties as responsible teachers. But in the maturation phase they learn at a more relaxed pace, focusing on the task of teaching rather than on themselves. (Fuller, 1969) Having passed the period of wondering whether they can actually teach, they move to consider how to teach best, and their impact on pupils’ learning.

“During my first year I was under a lot of pressure Now the pressure is less, as I am now familiar with the curriculum I am teaching. I am more focused on teaching now and I have more time than I did in the first year.” (Faten)

Clearly, maturation also suggests a greater focus on certain pedagogic tasks and their immediate results: learning has, in some cases, successfully compartmentalised and narrowed the types of practice evinced in this teaching phase. The focus of the teacher is on immediate practice and its results, rather than more theoretical perspectives. This

has both positive and negative results. They believe their personal experiences and the experimentation that takes place is what really “teaches” them to be teachers.

Experience is the most important thing. It is even more important than the pre-service training. We didn’t have much guidance at university. We didn’t gain much from our teaching practice or micro-teaching courses. Since I was appointed there aren’t even journals that we could read, nor in-service courses. Nothing but our own personal experience in teaching. (Amina)

Experiencing a “false beginning”, such as moving to a new school, especially during the second and third years, can trigger similar concerns. Learning, interrupted, may trigger quite a different set of experiences and perceptions; a sense of security may be more difficult to reestablish; enjoyment may be postponed or diminished.

No [I haven’t changed since I started teaching last year], maybe because this year I moved into a new school and still feel like a new teacher for the second time. I was on maternity leave and I came back during the mid-term with a class whose teacher moved to another school after she has been their teacher for a long period of time. I felt the pupils did not accept me as their new teacher. It was a very difficult experience for me (Fawzia)

A “false beginning” can put teachers through an experience similar to that of a novice (Christensen and Fessler, 1992), especially if the teacher has not yet become confident. One important difference is that the teacher is *not* a novice, and the hopes and expectations enjoyed by novices are not so readily available.

5.2.3.2. Feelings of Security, Confidence and Enjoyment

During the maturation phase many teachers experience an increasing feeling of relaxation and enjoyment. Almost all interviewees claim to enjoy teaching more than during their first year: understandable since there are fewer psychological and work pressures. They no longer feel the need to prove they are capable of teaching either to themselves or to others. Their experience gives them a feeling of security, which positively affects their pedagogy, and they enjoy a new confidence. The majority of interviewees said they began to feel secure in their teaching during their second years, and that this confidence was consolidated during their third years: 87% of the

questionnaire respondents agreed that confidence clearly increases with experience. In their fourth year, the majority of teachers feel confident and secure, and those in this study valued practical experience more than pre-service training. Confidence, gained from successful teaching experiences during the initial year, appears to be the main element behind feelings of relaxation and enjoyment. "...I gained more experience and became more confident of myself as a teacher. Now I feel I am more relaxed than during the first year." (Faten)

Perhaps teachers' general feelings of security and confidence and their attempts to experiment with different strategies and methods that they never dared to use as novices is what makes teaching more enjoyable in this phase. Looking for novelty in the face of pedagogic and ideological limitations already outlined, can be one way to breathe life into their classes. As time passes this search for ways around constraints must leave its mark on teachers' motivation and enjoyment. Teaching the same textbook in the same way year after year must affect teachers' stamina – probably negatively.

5.2.3.3. Effects of Initial Motivations for Entering the Profession

Initial career attitudes, or predispositions to teaching, are useful markers in examining later career choices, or decisions to stay in or leave teaching (see 6.3.1). Initial attitudes are measured by teachers' reasons for entering teaching. Yee's (1990) distinction between "good-fit" teachers and "weak-fit" teachers (see 2.4.3.2) is useful.

During the maturation and later phases, differences between those who were initially interested in teaching and those who were not, become visible. Having passed the initial and median phases and reached a plateau, differences between teachers become more evident. Those who genuinely enjoy teaching continue to be interested despite, in most cases, a discouraging collegiate environment; those who join the profession for material rewards, or who were forced into teaching, tend to reach a professional plateau very early. This research suggests that those who teach for intrinsic reasons show the least tendencies to think about quitting (see 4.8.2).

An example of a teacher with a genuine pedagogic vocation is Sara; having become a teacher for vocational reasons, Sara is determined to do her best. Despite working among colleagues who are not at all encouraging, she is determined to survive. “I try to resist and swim against the current. This is very hard as other teachers make me feel as if I come from another planet. They make me feel that my ideas are unrealistic.” The problems of vocationality clashing with collegiate pressures is plain here, and Sara’s sense of responsibility for her pupils is strong and seems to be the main force behind her commitment: the effect colleagues’ cynical remarks have on this commitment is, as yet, not great enough to discourage her.

What others around me think can act as tools to discourage and affect my motivation. However, when I think to myself I know that my pupils are a great responsibility. I always discuss this with my colleagues and tell them to break the routine themselves and not let it kill their motivation.”

In her discussions with colleagues, Sara tries to change attitudes – she is all too aware of the corrosive influence they may have on her pedagogy. Whereas most of the interviewees complained of pupils’ discouragingly low levels in English or their lack of motivation, Sara takes another position: for her weak pupils are “... a challenge. It is true that they can be weak but if you could help them and they pass, you are doing a great job.” She has high “personal efficacy”. (Gaith and Shaaban, 1999)

Teachers who believe in their personal ability to provide effective teaching that would bring about student learning are less concerned about their self-survival as teachers and about the demands of the teaching task than their less efficacious counterparts. Such high personal efficacy teachers may also be more confident about meeting the individual learning needs of their students and motivating them to learn than the low personal efficacy teachers. (ibid: 494)

Moza is another committed teacher who made an informed decision to join the profession based on strong familial experience of pedagogy. Both Moza and Sara have seen the amount of work family members put into teaching, and the difficulties they encountered; both have, in a sense, attained a more panoramic perspective of pedagogy, warts and all. Entering the profession with such a realistic picture helps prepare

someone for harsh realities – as well as exciting potentialities. Such psychological preparation makes entry and adjustment easier, while having family members who are dedicated teachers should be a source of moral and practical support, valuable since no systematic support is given to teachers in Oman.

However, teachers who slipped into teaching for various reasons display different attitudes. Although some teachers come to enjoy their work, the majority lack commitment and may end up constituting the cynical collegiate body already described; they may become interested in other things such as their families (see 6.3.2), and start to distance themselves from pupils. It is during the maturation phase that these teachers in particular show early signs of stagnation or burnout. It is worrying that 44.7% of the questionnaire sample said they remain in teaching mainly for financial reasons.

A common theme for almost all interviewees is their colleagues' cynical comments, negative attitudes to teaching and their lack of commitment. Such teachers are observed to work less, have less responsibility for their work, perceive teaching as a task to be done at school and forgotten about once home, and have greater emotional detachment. (Cherniss, 1980 cited in Hughes, 2001) From the frequency of my interviewees' remarks about their colleagues, the majority falls into this category. It seems natural, in hindsight, that cynicism was not easy to observe among respondents: it is a collegiate phenomenon glossed over when teachers speak individually about their experiences and ideologies. After careful re-readings of the interview scripts, I realised that I had come across cynics, but they were hardly likely to come forward and identify themselves. Instead they identified themselves in the concerns and traits of others – the “they”, the “the other teachers” the “older” or “more experienced”. In instances when I would ask if interviewees were affected by, or had become like those cynical teachers, the answer would sometimes carry hidden consent: for example, “perhaps/to some extent” or in partial and unconvincing denial, “no/I don't think so”.

An example of such a teacher is Amani, who has been a teacher for four years. She became a teacher “by chance. Just like this. There is no other field for women in Oman except teaching.” Amani explains that before actually starting teaching she thought that being a teacher was “...something easy. It is a matter of just saying a few words and

leaving class at the end of the lesson.” This, she says, encouraged her to teach – she thought it was easy. She discovered, through experience, that teaching is far from easy, and although she was enthusiastic at the beginning of her career, she gradually changed, and now finds it hard to continue. “Every year I say to myself, this will be the last teaching year for me but I don’t know why I continue ... I want any job except teaching.” Aware of this change in attitude, she confesses she now fails to “give” in teaching, and does not commit much emotional energy. Lack of a suitable alternative job is the reason she remains. Perhaps due to such specious attitudes, teachers get to the burnout stage fairly quickly – a situation aggravated by there being little to sustain or cultivate their interest. “[T]hinking about quitting is one component of the ‘climax of burnout’”, according to Friedman (1993 cited in Hughes, 2001:289).

5.2.3.4. The Effects of Marriage and Children on Commitment to Teaching

Although this will be discussed at length in chapter 6, it is relevant here to discuss it briefly. The Omani population and my research sample are both young: my sample is taken from among women in their most productive years. Given the social context of my research, replete with the local emphasis on family and early marriage, the effects of marriage and having children on careers is important. Perhaps it is appropriate to compare my sample at this phase in their careers to that of Sikes’s (1985) *Phase Two*. Sikes uses age as a main factor in explaining changes in teachers. However, the age span she uses for *Phase Two* is 28-33, whereas the age span for the majority of teachers in my research is 22-28. Since women in Oman, in general, get married earlier (usually in their early twenties, after they graduate from university), it is understandable that the sample reached *Phase Two* faster than Sikes’s sample.

This phase carries with it commitments and responsibilities, as life becomes more serious – especially with the addition of children. Since Omani society generally sees women’s roles as wives and mothers as important, this role is prioritized once a woman gets married and has children (see 4.5). Women in Oman say freely that family is their priority and career comes second. Many respondents expressed an interest in balancing their careers with their home lives, but the implicit judgement was that family is a priority.

A: Do you think that the fact that you are still single contributed to your sustained interest and enthusiasm in teaching?

M: Sort of. Perhaps yes. But even when I get married I should respect my job and prepare to it. I need to have time for my family and job. (Moza)

Such prioritising has a deeper effect than merely altering the amount of time and energy available for teaching.

A: Does being a wife and a mother affect you as a teacher?

K: It affects my behaviour with my pupils. I feel I have matured and I deal with them as a mother. My relationship with them has changed.” (Khulood)

Marital status has a profound effect on teachers’ job commitment. I found differences in pedagogic attitude between single and married teachers. Single teachers tend to sustain initial career enthusiasm and invest effort and time, whereas married teachers, especially those with children, tend to treat teaching as secondary to family and, in general, do the minimum required (see 6.3.2).

5.2.3.5. The Effect of Routine on Teachers’ Motivation

My research indicates that routine is a main reason teachers in the maturation phase suffer a decline in their enthusiasm: 48.8% of the questionnaire respondents reported that a main dissatisfier was a boring routine. I found that as teachers gain experience, they complain more about dissatisfaction with routine (see 4.7.2) – in almost every interview the words “boring” and “routine” crop up frequently, linked to comments about careers; the phrase “repetitive work” was cited as a major cause of career dissatisfaction (Carroll, 1969). After only two years teaching Amina found that “teaching has become a routine to me. It’s just preparation and delivery of lessons. I feel this despite my efforts to revitalise things, but my enthusiasm has declined so much.” This sense of routine can make some teachers so frustrated they consider changing jobs. “I want to stop teaching because of this killing and boring routine. I like change, but I cannot change the nature of my job. I wish I could have any administrative post because I find administrative work more interesting than teaching.” (Moza)

The educational context within which these teachers work is key to understanding why almost all teachers feel bored after so short a time. The educational system in Oman is a highly centralised system, and teachers are expected to work through the rigidly allocated syllabi and set books. Their role is limited to delivering prescribed content at the prescribed speed. There is no freedom to vary content or strategies.

My problem now is that I have no freedom to do what I want. We need to follow the syllabus. At times there are other strategies than the ones in the textbook that we could use to achieve the same objectives, but we have to follow the textbook because the exam is from the textbook. (Moza)

One of the main effects of this is that teachers are frustrated by the lack of independence, and this can negatively affect motivation. A centralised system cannot foster creative autonomy, and may produce teachers content to do only the minimum. The entwined lack of an initial desire to teach with the absence of any support systems once teaching commences, may have profoundly negative effects on “professionalism” and commitment.

5.2.3.6. Teachers’ Need for In-Service Training (IST)

Organisational support for professional development is an important factor in the way teachers view their work positively or negatively: most teachers want and seek professional stimulation. Even low-involvement teachers, attracted by easy workloads, admit some interest in improvement and feedback (Yee, 1990:113). Weiss (1999) calls for more support for experienced teachers, principals and other administrators “by equipping them with the knowledge and skills necessary to transform their schools into environments that are more responsive to the needs of all teachers.” (ibid: 871) Teachers in this phase, and those subsequent (see 5.2.4.3), voice their urgent needs for IST. The majority of respondents have been to very few IST courses; some have been to none. Ayyash-Abdo (2000) in her study about the status of female teachers in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, including Oman, finds that IST is not considered a necessity, and is often left to the initiative of the individual teacher.

As years pass teachers come to value formal training over practical experience, while as novices they used to value practical experience more. “Experience is not enough. We need training.” (Amani) Teachers, naturally, learn over the courses of their careers; however, learning solely from experience will “ultimately limit development” (Day, 1999:2), and many may instinctively recognise this. Having colleagues with a similar training background, with similar teaching experiences, of similar youthfulness, means teachers are unlikely to find among colleagues a valuable source of different pedagogical ideas. Teachers during the maturation phase become frustrated, feeling the need for new ideas: 39.8% of questionnaire respondents report that their main difficulty is being creative in terms of teaching ideas and methods; 30.1% felt dissatisfied because they lacked the chance to be creative. Because they are not exposed to alternative pedagogies, and are dependent on themselves to learn new skills within a predictable and closed school environment, means they tend to use limited strategies. Faten says what dissatisfies her is a “lack of in-service training courses. They help in refreshing us and in providing us with new ideas for teaching.” Another response was more precise. “The thing that I miss most now is courses. I haven’t had a single in-service training course since I was appointed as a teacher ... a teacher needs to update herself at least once every two years.” (Amani) Exposed to little that is new or thought-provoking builds on the already powerful sense among teachers at this stage that their pedagogy has more in common with a hamster on an exercise wheel than a freer, more intellectually challenging pedagogy. IST is one valuable way to reconnect teachers to the world beyond their immediate collegiate environment.

However, positive attitudes to IST are not necessarily indicative of active and reactive pedagogy. While IST may be crucial to teachers’ development through their career cycle, there is revealed in these comments a tendency towards reliance on others rather than on personal resources – a dependency attitude: the majority do not take their professional development as achievable through independent learning. IST should never pander to such a culture of dependency: if teachers blame educational authorities for not providing them with IST, they may also lapse into a mentality which ignores alternative ways of developing themselves professionally: although 29.7% of the questionnaire respondents said that they “always” depend on themselves for professional development and a further 48.1% said they do “sometimes” (see 4.4), the majority of interviewees did

not elaborate about the ways they use for self development; some shyly state that they “try to”, “sometimes” read about “some areas” in which they feel they have a difficulty or a need for ideas.

Resources for self-development are scarce: Safa explains “there are no resources and no time”, and although she claims that reading is useful, she does not attempt reading herself. This attitude may be the result of two factors: the environment within which teachers work, and the educational system, including the pre-service training. An inspirational environment is a prerequisite for dedicated, committed and innovative teachers (see 7.3). The educational system both in schools and even in higher education still puts emphasis on rote learning, dependency and homogeneity. The pre-service programme tends to produce an army of teachers with similar skills instead of encouraging teachers to explore alternatives and be innovative. One of the aims of an “educating process” pre-service programme, according to Larsen-Freeman (1983), is to emphasise the notion of the “independent learner”. The programme should help student teachers learn how to learn, and how to assume responsibility for continued learning. Developing an autonomous teacher should be the ultimate goal of teacher preparation programmes. (Britten, 1988)

5.2.3.7. Early Concern with Promotion

Towards the end of the maturation phase teachers show an interest in promotion. The situation of teachers in Oman, however, is unusual – there is a high demand for teachers, since more than 40% of the population is under 14. Schools are built constantly and teachers are needed to cover all levels. With the implementation of Omanization the emphasis is now on qualifying and appointing native Omanis. The implementation of the early retirement scheme in 1996 (see 1.5) meant the loss of less academically qualified but more experienced Omani teachers. Irregularities result: some teachers may be given senior posts early in their careers, especially in rural areas; others, especially in the capital, may teach for ten years and still do not get the chance of promotion. This creates a concern, throughout the teaching body, with promotion.

I could be a teacher with 7-10 years of experience but this doesn't mean that I am a good teacher. Experience is not calculated on the basis of the number of years one spends in teaching. It is about using variety in teaching. Some people in school think of experience in terms of years for example in choosing a senior teacher. In my opinion, the choice of a senior teacher should not be based on this criterion only but on excellence in teaching. There aren't any qualifications. People here fight over this post and when they get there and you ask them for help in something you find they don't know a thing and you feel that you are better than them. (Moza)

There will always be grievances regarding who has and who has not been promoted, and regarding the criteria used in granting promotion. In Oman, these are peculiarly skewed, partly because of the large number of teaching posts, the youth and relative inexperience of teachers, the stresses of Omanization which may put under-qualified people into senior posts, and the nascent nature of Omani pedagogy in general. Promotion becomes less a recognisable process of skill recognition, and more often a process of political and economic expediency.

5.2.4. Stage Four: The Mid-Career Phase

Teachers mature not only in terms of age, but also in their pedagogy. With between 7 and 11 years of experience (in my research) they are now very well-established in their jobs and are, in general, respected as experienced professionals, especially by pupils and less experienced colleagues. Those in the mid-career phase constitute the experienced corps of teachers – the source of advice for the younger and less experienced. This phase also enjoys different names: Huberman (1993) calls it “the Serenity and Relational Distance Phase”, Day (1999) “Reaching a Professional Plateau” and, when compared with Christensen and Fessler's (1992) model, it corresponds to two of their phases: the “Career Frustration” and “Stability” stages. The hallmarks of this phase are that teachers have reached a professional plateau and are increasingly concerned with promotion.

5.2.4.1. Emotional Experiences

Teachers in their mid-careers should be confident professionals enjoying the benefits of experience, certain of their competence. All the interviewees said that they had changed

a lot since they joined the profession, and experience had been the chief factor underlying the change.

I have changed a lot since my first year in teaching. I am mature and experienced ... when I get into the classroom I feel myself an adult with experience. I teach them the same lessons that I used to teach before, but in totally different ways to the ones I used in the past. (Maha)

Maryam relates experience to growing older, and the age gap between her and her pupils is important for her image as a teacher, making her an authority figure in the school. This is akin to a natural promotion, albeit one that may not be hierarchically recognized. Experience can boost self-confidence and help a teacher understand better the needs of pupils.

I've changed for the better since my first year in teaching. My years of experience have helped me to know what is suitable for my pupils. ... I have much more confidence in myself as a teacher and in my ways of teaching. I do enjoy teaching now more than I used to during the first years. Sometimes I might be tired or prepare the lesson on the spot yet I teach it as if I had prepared it carefully. Experience helps a lot. (Reem)

Discussions, especially with experienced others such as inspectors, are welcomed by teachers at this phase: these give the chance to spell out their teaching philosophy now deepened and adapted by experience. Teachers feel they have a solid base from which to act, and about which they are comfortable to talk.

I am very confident now and I can confront and discuss with any inspector. This is something I couldn't do when I was in my early years in teaching. I have teaching experience upon which I rely. I am much more comfortable in teaching as I don't have any pressure in preparation as I am very much familiar with the curriculum and I prepare my lessons at school. (Haya)

Familiarity and experience generate a feeling of mastery and may allow the teacher to be confident enough to voice her own pedagogic philosophy, even if it contradicts others.

I feel I have a good command, that I am standing on solid earth, unlike in the past. Now if anyone comes to discuss things with me I can give my own opinion because I have experience. I do my job and I am relaxed. There can be things that I accept, argue about or even change. I have a base now. (Aseel)

Teachers adopt a relaxed attitude (Huberman, 1992), and are under less pressure. They are at ease in the classroom, no longer consciously focussing on performance as they had done during the early years. They would have taught most levels by now, and this makes them familiar with the different textbooks used at each academic level. This familiarity and experience adds to and refines confidence and their feelings of mastery. However, teaching stops being a challenge. Familiarity provides security, but now teaching "... may, paradoxically, lack the variety, challenge and discovery of earlier years." (Day, 1999: 61)

Now I laugh at the way I used to feel during my early years in teaching. For example when they used to ask me to make an exam I used to become nervous and work really hard. It was terror. Now I can make an exam in one minute. Piece of cake. (Asma)

Coupled with the sense of routine experienced by all teachers in my research, teachers at this phase reach a plateau. There is an increased sense of unhappiness about teaching compared with previous phases. Even familiarity with the textbooks affects and erodes enthusiasm. (Day, 1999 and Sikes, 1984).

The textbooks I am using are easy for me because I am familiar with them. There is nothing in them to develop us as teachers. The curriculum is not challenging. The same things I said last year and the year before it, I say it today and will be saying it tomorrow. If I, for any reason, didn't have time to prepare for my lessons, there is no problem because I know the textbook by heart. It brings about boredom and routine. (Haya)

Familiarity generates a simplified picture for the teacher of herself in a predictable, unchallenging environment. Disassociation from basic motivation becomes a problem. Some teachers at this phase show symptoms of "burnout", doing only what is expected of them and no more (Christensen and Fessler, 1992). Some may, in extreme cases, leave the profession – though this is rarely the case in Oman due to absence of appropriate alternative job opportunities for females: 37% of the questionnaire respondents remained in teaching for this reason, whereas the majority 44.7% confessed remaining mainly for financial reasons. This is related to teachers' initial motives to join the profession (see 6.3.1).

The sense of routine and feelings of boredom teachers experience at this phase, perhaps as a result of teaching the same textbooks for years and lacking any adequate provisions for professional or psychological development, make them reach a professional plateau fairly fast. When asked about how they would describe their current situation, 44.4% of the questionnaire respondents in this group said they felt bored and longed for new ideas. A further 44.4% said the main difficulty they faced was being creative in terms of teaching ideas and methods, while 37% said they needed training in obtaining and using new pedagogic strategies. These percentages indicate teachers' need for some kind of "refreshment" of their fund of professional expertise, knowledge and skills, in a way that recognizes and respects that professionalism.

5.2.4.2. Concern with Promotion

In the hierarchically-defined social environment, promotion is in some ways a replacement for those levels of care and recognition which are simply not available. Instead of managing teachers by paying attention to their needs, responding to their worries and providing opportunities to learn outside the classroom environment, management becomes the promise of promotion, or the threat of its being withheld. At this phase in teacher development, promotion takes on a different complexion, because it is, in a way, the only significant objective. Teachers might be stagnating because their work is unsatisfying and unchallenging; the majority feels the need for change, and promotion opportunities may be the only, or most available, chance for this (Sikes, 1984). Many opt for a senior post, others want to experience non-teaching work in administration (Sikes, 1985): 29.6% of the questionnaire sample expressed a wish for an administrative post within the school. Promotion has thus taken on a different complexion: it becomes either a *raison d'être* or a way out.

Promotion may not mean more money: teachers are civil servants, and the terms of service are permanent – their salaries are determined by educational qualifications and civil service grades. However, promotion does mean extra responsibilities, and therefore a change of scenery much needed by many teachers in this phase. Where promotion is not forthcoming, frustration may replace boredom. Where it seems to be deliberately

withheld, frustration may become anger. Where the withholding is systemic rather than something more personal, anger is directed at the pedagogic structure itself.

All things go by “wasta” [the use of contacts or influence]. Even if one is experienced they still take others for higher position like supervision and curriculum design. On what basis do they choose people for these positions? It really maddens me. (Haya)

Haya applied for many administrative posts in the Ministry of Education, but never got any. She is angry, and wonders how many such positions are allocated by “wasta”. In a way, concern with promotion at this stage of a teaching career lays bare the systemic inadequacies which have always affected their pedagogy. “Wasta” can be lived with when teachers are hoping for promotion at an earlier career stage because there is still time to prove oneself and there is still a residue of optimism; when this later stage is reached, optimism has evaporated, and “wasta” stands out for the corruption it is. Seeing other teachers – especially those with less experience and expertise and perhaps with the benefit of “wasta” – achieve higher posts makes for job dissatisfaction, and profound disenchantment. Feeling bitter, some might become those cynics who influence less experienced colleagues’ attitudes (see 5.2.3.3).

There is also the significant element during mid-career of the “career clock” (Kimmel, 1990: 303) where “the individual’s subjective sense of being ‘on time’ or ‘behind time’ in career development”. This is a pressure felt most acutely when markers, such as expected promotions, may be postponed. “Wasta” would have a particular effect on the career clock, in that it would speed it up, making teachers more aware of the time they have served, and their position in respect of promotion.

5.2.4.3. The Need for Pedagogic Freedom

With growing confidence, teachers’ need for freedom increases: at this stage they feel competent enough to participate in policy making, curriculum design and other related decisions; they believe policy makers and textbook designers should consult their experience and practical knowledge. “They should give more freedom to us to choose what is suitable for our pupils or at least let us take part in designing the textbooks instead of imposing those on us.” (Reem) Many feel discouraged and frustrated when,

in reality, this consultation does not happen, and expressed their wish to utilise their expertise and to be given larger roles in the educational process. “I wish I had more freedom to do what I wanted in the classroom. We have discussed this many times in workshops but no one listens to us.” (Haya) There is currently much investment in educational and curriculum development in Oman. However, the return on such investment is jeopardised if teachers feel they are under-recognised.

IST would obviate this feeling. Although overall there is a lack of IST for teachers in Oman, EFL teachers are luckiest in this respect, though many go through many years without any IST. The interviewed teachers were aware of this issue and pointed to their need for such training. At this career phase, after at least six years on the job, there is a perceptible need for such courses to refresh and renew pedagogy. There is a general feeling that opportunities for development, including promotion, are limited. Interviewees pointed specifically to their need for new ideas and strategies in teaching.

I do need in-service courses very much because since I started working as a teacher eight years ago not once did they send me on one! What I have taken at university nine years ago is all that I know and try to implement. There isn't any renewing of strategies or creativity. No one cares really about these things. In-service training courses are very important in my opinion. (Reem)

The implicit need here is a lack of concern with teachers from collegiate administration or ministerial bureaucracy: the lack of IST during eight years can be read as a lack of significant contact. Aseel, taking a course to become an inspector, is expressing a similar idea, but linking it to the value of new input.

Everyone continues to be in need of something no matter how experienced he or she might be. We need new teaching ideas. I am currently taking an inspection course but I do use some of the ideas I learn with my secondary pupils and they do enjoy them although they (those ideas) are originally intended for elementary level pupils. (Aseel)

The “something” teachers need may be the valuable input of IST, and, linked to this, a sense of being linked to a system that recognises and respects their pedagogy. Some teachers are so wrapped up in their work they are not conscious of how IST can benefit their professional practice, and sense of belonging.

I do need in-service courses. To be honest I didn't realise this need until I took one course and I felt that we really need them. In-service courses are very much needed especially through the different stages other teachers and I move through. Ideally, at least every two years teachers should go on a two-month training course. They are very important indeed as they teach us things that we can implement in our classrooms. (Maha)

Maha is expressing the practicalities of the need for IST: but the subtler psychological advantages to teachers and the system as a whole should not be obscured by this.

5.2.4.4. Inspectors

The relationship of mid-career teachers with their inspectors differs from that of less experienced colleagues: fear and insecurity dominate the dialogue between inexperienced teachers and inspectors, and this dialogue is, in most cases, one-way. However, experienced teachers with greater self-confidence engage in a true dialogue reflecting the confidence derived from experience. Those interviewed felt relaxed about inspectors' visits, and some even looked forward to them – in some cases to find the recognition and receive the compliments they need; they do not hesitate to discuss and argue, nor do they hide their disagreement, though teachers may still display respect because they know inspectors write up performance appraisal reports. Inspectors' behaviour with experienced teachers also differs from the way they deal with inexperienced teachers: more discussion is allowed, and this can reflect greater levels of trust: even following the prescribed textbooks may not be obligatory. "My relation with my inspector is very good. I like her because she tells me to feel free in the classroom and do what I think suitable for my pupils. She encourages me to be creative instead of following the teacher's book." (Asma) This is the one positive point of contact with the hierarchy that experienced teachers mention. "I feel satisfied when an inspector visits my school but doesn't come to observe my lessons because she thinks I am well qualified and not in need of such visits." (Maha) The satisfaction seems to be localised to the times of the visits, and it unlikely such feelings would adequately replace dissatisfaction engendered from elsewhere: the freedom celebrated would also be an inadequate replacement for more widespread and deeper contact, and the absence of IST or proper systems of promotion. Experience may be as much a condition of restriction as inexperience, only in some senses worse since the perceptive experienced teacher

realises that, pedagogically, they have used every strategy and rung every change – there may simply be nothing else their career can offer them, except the benefit of retirement.

5.3. Summary of Chapter

It is clear ... that differences do exist between “novice”, “experienced” and “expert” teachers. The “poor-fit” which many novice teachers feel between what they have learned about teaching and its application to practice is a well-known phenomenon Experienced teachers, also, despite their abilities in managing the immediacy and busyness that characterize the press of classroom life, are often imprisoned by it.

(Day, 1999: 52)

This chapter has dealt with the discussion of the career phases that the sample of this cross-sectional study moved through. Contextual factors such as gender, social influences and the educational system itself were found to play key roles in teachers’ lives. The professional status of teachers, and hence their career development, is determined by “social, economic and political stipulations” (Ayyash-Abdo, 2000:203). Some findings were in line with earlier research: for example, trainees’ and novices’ anxiety about performance, or experienced teachers’ concerns with promotion. Other findings, mainly generated by specific contextual factors, differed: for example, the primacy in Western research of trainee and novice respondents’ concerns about discipline and class management was found not to be the case in the Omani context.

The study found the sample moved through four main stages. The first during their academic preparation: student teachers are themselves pupils, and this characterises their experiences. The second part of the Academic Phase witnesses trainees’ preoccupation with their new roles in schools: they experience teaching, and their experience is both interesting and distressing. The fascination of discovery coupled with the burden of classroom survival and anxiety about pedagogic adequacy and performance are the features of this stage. During the Novitiate Phase, novices return to school as teachers: this shift in role is so sudden and intense it requires significant adjustment to be made. Pride generated by responsibility is quickly replaced by fear of failure. Reality may be shocking for the majority, yet typical early enthusiasm is of

tremendous help in overcoming emotional, physical and mental turbulence. At such a difficult time, novices seek support, and need to feel they belong; turning at first to their own pupils but moving gradually into their colleagues' team. The third phase is characterised by teachers' rapid pedagogic growth: teachers in the Maturation Phase have increasing levels of self-confidence and competence – this is a learning period in which they experiment with and refine teaching strategies. Teachers in this phase might move from enjoying teaching to experiencing a decline in enthusiasm. Many factors shape teachers' attitudes, for example their initial motives in becoming teachers, and their relationship to the collegiate community. Towards the end of this stage, teachers are concerned about promotion. Finally, those teachers who reach the Mid-Career Phase are well established in their careers: they may consider themselves competent, having gained respect because of the length of experience. However, a decline in enthusiasm, and the routine of teaching, may lead the majority to a professional plateau or “burn out”. One way to escape may be to become more interested in promotion – but this is no simple solution and may well create a sense of cynicism and extremes of dissatisfaction. The importance of gender and of gender related events such as motherhood on motivation and commitment on the way teachers pass through, and experience career stages, should not be underestimated.

Chapter Six: *Gender, Career Choice and Commitment*

6.1. Introduction

This chapter deals with one of the key themes that emerged from the data: the role of gender in career choice, career commitment and professional development. This chapter discusses the second research question regarding what interplay exists between teachers' personal and professional lives: and from this, what attracts Omani women into teaching careers, and what the role of gender is in their professional lives.

These questions stem from my personal interest in the popularity of teaching as a career for women in Oman. Although being part of that society gave me some insights, researching lent me considerable objectivity. Although gender issues were not explicitly discussed during the interviews, (at the analysis stage) it emerged as playing a key role in respondents' experiences. The data confirmed my initial anticipation that gender and society played an important part in Omani women's choice of teaching as a career, but revealed as well a significant relationship between initial motives to join teaching and subsequent commitment to and satisfaction with teaching. Overall, the rights women have been granted, rather than gained, to work outside the home have only added to their workload: women have to do two demanding jobs, and help from their husbands is either unavailable or limited. One of the conclusions of any social change may be an increase in stress in the medium term for some: in my research women expressed becoming more pressured physically, emotionally and intellectually. The interviews provide a wealth of illuminating commentary.

6.2. Gender: A Driving Force in Career Choice

The issue of gender, and the roles expected from each sex, is a central theme in the discussion of careers. (Veenis, 1998; Stockman et al. 1995; Greenhaus and Parasuraman, 1999; and Drew and Emerek, 1998) Men and women have traditionally

been attributed certain unique characteristics, and partly based on these come the traditional expectations and responsibilities: such assumed essential differences have been determiners of and an ideological basis for continued role demarcation. Women bear children, and are initial sole carers – this can be extended easily into the establishment of the gender in the caring role. Because of their apparent greater physical strength men seem better suited to be the “breadwinners”. However, perception may be more powerful than reality: globally, and certainly in developing societies, women do more hard physical work, agriculturally, domestically and industrially, than do their male counterparts. (WHO, 2003)

The issue of gender was crucial in this research. But while some research suggests that, in teaching, gender results in vertical segregation between staff, (e.g. Bradley, 1989; Acker, 1994; and Ben-Peretz, 1996) with males more likely to gain promotion than women, this is not the case in Oman where state schools are single-sex. There are positives in the Omani model. Buserup (1969, cited in Kelly, 1984: 85) argues that “sex segregation may, in some instances, actually increase women’s access to higher education, simply because there is a demand for women professionals to serve as teachers, doctors and the like for other women.” Single sex educational systems result in less competition at work, which in turn lessens the vertical segregation in teaching marking systems where both genders work in the same place. (Bradley, 1989) While the roles Omani women play both domestically and elsewhere have been greatly affected by the provision of universal education, unavailable before 1970 (see 1.3.2), traditional, and not only male attitudes, still restrain women within a maternal role. Gender was found to exert considerable influence over motives to teach, and later job commitment and possibly job satisfaction.

6.2.1. Gender and Omani Teachers’ Motives to Join the Profession: the Power of Social and Cultural Forces

A culture and its dominant ideologies exercise influence no less, and sometimes perhaps more in the specific issue of women’s work than elsewhere. How a woman is viewed, what role she is expected to fill and what responsibilities she has, or has been given in society, are each important in determining the extent to which women anywhere enjoy

opportunities in work. How a society perceives the work it deems suitable for women is “very influential in shaping a woman’s experience and how they interpret that experience”. (Branner and Moss, 1991)

In Oman the strict definition of gender roles has traditionally restricted women’s choices of careers, and frequently their academic choices. In a society that places great importance on women’s traditional roles as carers, it was unsurprising that the majority of questionnaire respondents (83.2%) said they joined teaching because it was suitable for women (see 4.3.3). This was predictable, given the religious and social context: the primary role for women is domestic, any other job is secondary. As we have seen in 4.3.3, most of the reasons respondents cited for joining the profession (51.2%) fall within the socio-cultural category. Social and familial pressures should, perhaps, be considered identical for the sake of this research, since these pressures to conform have the same ideological roots, take similar forms, and are expressed similarly.

It is plain that Omani society, as is the case in most developing countries, gives a specious priority to “male work”, while downgrading equally and often more arduous non-domestic female work. This is considered complementary and therefore less important; simultaneously, a woman’s presence at home is given greater ideological importance, as a way to compensate for, or excuse, the fundamental injustice. These culturally-defined expectations of women as homemakers are more marked in the deeply traditional rural areas of Oman. Asma admits that becoming a teacher was a decision influenced by the social forces dominant in the small village where she lives.

We are in a society that differs from the capital city. Our society doesn’t accept a lot of things. They are still sticking to their customs for examples if I worked in the acting field they would definitely condemn me. So, my family encouraged me to become a teacher because our society would never accept any other job for women.

Despite ideological pressures, the economic situation means that many women must work, but their primary identities as carers deeply influence their choices of jobs. Parents, whenever possible, try to find an “easy” job for their daughters; one that demands little of the time or effort which, ideally, should be spent caring for their families. Teaching is frequently regarded as compatible with domesticity, and this

prevailing misconception of teaching as an easy career further encourages Omani females to teach. Shama says that her family wanted her to be a teacher because “they viewed teaching as easier than other jobs for women”; Khulood admits this frequent misconception, and is furious that it lowers standards: “This is the problem we are suffering from now. Teaching has become a job for anyone and everyone. There are teachers who shouldn’t be teachers.” Besides encouraging women to join teaching regardless of their ability, and feminizing the profession, at least in the primary stage, the MOE decided actively to feminize teaching in the first circle of Basic Education, grades 1-4. This misconception, in the long term, weakens the status of the teaching profession in Oman.

Teaching is considered most suitable for those women with plans to raise children, (Lortie, 1975) and is measured by its compatibility with family life, especially in terms of work which can later give skills to be made available in teaching her own children. The daily work schedules also appear convenient and the holidays are long compared to other professions, allowing a teacher to spend time with her children, especially those of school-age, on holiday at the same time as their mother. According to Hantrais (1990), most women become teachers for two reasons: a sense of vocation and because it is an occupation compatible with raising children. As an extension of the nurturing aspect, teaching carries with it a moral mission (Bradley, 1989), considered another compatible attraction.

The Omani situation bears some resemblance to conditions elsewhere, where perceptions of teaching are that it is a career compatible with women's physical “limitations”, and their emotional and maternal natures. However, there are additional, distinct dimensions particular to the Omani context. I have identified four, derived from the research data: (1) Suitability of teaching to women’s nature and the more valued future role of motherhood; (2) The single sex environment of the Omani school system; (3) The good working conditions and salaries of teachers in Oman, and (4) The immediate employment of new graduates in teaching, because of the high demand for teachers.

6.2.1.1. Perception of Teaching as a Woman's Career and Effect on Girls' Choices of Career

Respondents comment on choosing a career in teaching because it is “the only career for women” or “the best job for a woman”. This statement is more complex than it appears: compatibility with family life, in terms of working conditions, is one aspect, but the fact that teaching means working in an all-female environment is key in a society still deeply influenced by religious considerations.

The Omani environment orients girls from an early age to teaching as the only, or most suitable work option – this limits a girl's ambitions as she automatically excludes other possibilities. In particular, the opinions of older family members are sought and respected. Despite the fact that 43.2% of the sample denying being influenced in their decision to join teaching, interviewees are particular witnesses to the power of society and family, indicating, often with a sardonic subtext, how they, not always consciously, limited their future work options. “There are no other fields for women here except teaching. Our parents and family put in our minds that we either become teachers or doctors.” (Amani) “It was the only alternative I had. My family prefers women to be teachers and I never thought of other fields.” (Zakia) The implicit feelings articulated here are of frustration and a sense of injustice, and although the effect of socialization is powerful, early exclusion of other employment options can leave a sense of opportunities lost, which may have the effect of damaging teachers' attitudes to their own pedagogy – a career chosen by default. Moza admits that becoming a teacher was a result of her parents' persistent “advice”, although she initially studied in the college of agriculture for a year and a half: “My mother kept telling me that the real place for a woman is to be a teacher.”

Choice was at a premium for many respondents - some females were given the choice between staying at home or becoming teachers: effectively the decision was made for them. 27.1% of the questionnaire sample admitted they took the decision against their own wishes, while those who joined out of personal interest in teaching constituted just 15.4% of the sample (see 4.3.1).

You know we are in a society which didn't give us much choice; either teaching or staying at home. There was no other alternative at that time. Actually the subject was not negotiated at all. When the secondary examination results came out my father asked me what college I wanted. I said the college of arts. He said "no, apply in the college of education". I agreed, end of story. (Reem)

Limited choice may lead to later pedagogic limitations, perhaps demonstrated in more negative effects in the various phases of development. Choice is closely linked to the identification of and with career goals: if a goal is only such because it has been designated by others, then it is less a goal than a limitation: there is a sense of failure identified by respondents even *before* they started their careers.

I didn't have any choice. My family decided that all the girls in the family should either be teachers or stay at home. They were influenced by our society which prefers women to work in teaching. I didn't have any other goals because I had known since I was a child that I could only be a teacher when I grew up. (Bushra)

Filial obedience may be highly valued in Oman – what Lortie (1975) calls “parental prohibition and dutiful daughters” – but the effect of prolonged exposure to limited choice, and the imposition of goals, may be wider and deeper than expected, not only in pedagogy, but also on the system of filial obedience itself. Choice is further limited not only by notions of suitability, but also by the respective levels of academic commitment of those careers that are considered suitable. Teaching and medicine may be considered the most suitable, but the longer duration and greater difficulty of medical training, and the significantly more demanding nature of the job, means many females have little real choice, even in this limited area.

There was no other choice except teaching or medicine. Teaching was more suitable for my circumstances. What else will I be? An engineer? There are not many alternatives especially in this region. Education was better than medicine because the programme was only four years unlike medicine where I had to study for a much longer period as well as being more difficult than education. (Safa)

Although she expresses dissatisfaction with the limited options in Oman, her statement reflects deep-rooted beliefs about suitable work for women. Optimism about careers may have an effect on later resilience. Doing what others “expect” does not mean an

individual conforms to concepts of the “norm”, but instead creates a gap between the individual and society, and the individual and her career “choice”. Conforming in order not to look inferior, must create an unusual relationship between the individual who chooses and their choice. It is unlikely this relationship will be positive or creative.

Most of the things we do are not because we are convinced of them or a result of deep thinking. We do what others expect us to do. Teaching is one example. Society wants us to be teachers- not in any other job. However, if I thought about it or if I were given the chance to choose I wouldn't choose teaching. (Bushra)

The majority of interviewees confessed they had not thought about their suitability for teaching when they chose to enrol in the College of Education: the primary consideration was the appropriateness of the profession for women. Introspection could have negative implications on their pedagogy, their enjoyment and subsequent commitment to teaching. The majority started to think about the issue of suitability when they started the micro teaching course in term six, during their third year; some even started to consider it when they started TP in the seventh and eighth terms, during their final year.

I wasn't concerned about whether I could be a good teacher or even if I was going to like teaching. I just wanted to be an English language teacher because I liked the English language. However, when we started micro teaching at the university I started to think about this. During the summer holiday before the start of TP I began to think more about teaching as a career. (Noora)

Other interviewees say similar things, showing that suitability is a very secondary consideration. “I never thought whether teaching is a suitable career for me” (Zakia); “I wasn't sure I was suitable to be a teacher, but I wasn't afraid of that. I never imagined myself as a teacher. I thought about this briefly when I applied to the college of education” (Farah). What these responses, especially Farah's, indicate is that an individual's consideration of “suitability” is not a quality thought important to a career choice: suitability may be unimportant for some, more like a choice of a temporary job than a professional career. Although some respondents were, undoubtedly, personally suitable, the overriding force was the general perception of the suitability of the job for a woman, and this distorts conceptions of suitability. It has been discussed that the

common perception of teaching is that it is an easy job anyone can do. This raises the question of the suitability of many teachers, and indicates that many Omani women teach not as a result of commitment, or even as the result of a conscious decision, or as a choice based on any real awareness of alternatives, but because they are drawn into teaching either by a system of socialization where girls are led to believe that teaching was the only or best option for them, or because of social and parental force, or as a combination of the two constraints. It is not surprising then that 41.1% of the questionnaire sample had considered leaving (see 4.8.2). The absence of a real interest in teaching (only 15.4% of the questionnaire sample reported joining teaching because they liked the job) combined with a misconception about the task itself (45% of the sample said the reality of teaching was nothing like they expected) leads inevitably to discomfort and a desire to quit.

6.2.1.2. The Attraction of Teaching as a Women-Only Work Environment

Omani society, especially in the interior, is deeply conservative. In this social context, people believe in the value and indeed desirability of sexual segregation, and there are many who strongly oppose any idea of a mixed workplace; some still believe women should not engage in non-domestic work. However, financial considerations mean Omani men increasingly prefer to marry working women: the best option is to marry a teacher, since the education system balances the equation – extra family income and, at the same time, keeping in line with tradition. It is always preferred for a wife to work in a place that guarantees minimal or no contact with the opposite sex.

First, the school environment doesn't have men. So, there is no mixing with men and even if there is then it is to a minimum level. This was a main reason for me because the way I was brought up compelled us not to mix with men. The second reason is that almost all of the working women in my family are teachers. Therefore, because of my upbringing and not wanting to be different from the others I chose teaching like them. I wanted to work in an international organization but this remained a dream because my upbringing forced me to limit my thinking to teaching. Society and my family influenced my career choice because when I started to think seriously about my future career I forgot about my dream because it didn't match reality. (Khulood)

Khulood summarises the reasons why Omani women teach, and also suggests the powerful early recollection of an ideal or “dream” in favour of the pressure to conform.

For some conformity means conformity to a husband's wishes, whatever their own might be; Fawzia is not happy as a teacher, and would like to change her job, but cannot because "my husband refuses that I work in any other field", in this case because he knows no other career would provide an all-female environment. In this context it may not be surprising that 54.7% of the questionnaire sample chose an all-female environment as the second most usual reason to teach (see 4.3.3). Farah is typical in this respect – and adds an extra dimension beyond conformity, that of comfort. In a society used, in certain regions, to rigorous sexual division, even the idea of mixing generates uncomfortable emotions, and career choice therefore takes account of personal comfort. "My parents didn't make me used to mixing with men, so I found teaching more suitable for me because the school environment is an all female one. Because of my nature I am not able to work in a place with men." It may well prove, as has been the case in English schools where girls move from a single sex to an alien, mixed environment, that, should such teachers ever work with men, their work would suffer.

6.2.1.3. Immediate Employability and Good Working Terms as Attractions to Teaching

In Oman, the College of Education remains the first choice for candidates because teaching is associated with immediate placement in a secure public sector job - In 2002, 28.5% of female applicants to SQU enrolled in the college of education. This fits with the general picture of the Omani economy as a rentier economy, where oil has been a significant distorting factor: the public sector is seen as a place of security and provision by right. Perhaps in this context, previous considerations of "suitability" – or lack of them – are put into context.

The demand for teachers because of Oman's growing, youthful population (see chapter one) means parents find a reinforcing factor to encourage daughters into teaching. Noora confirms that her family encouraged her to enrol in the college of education because "...the job is guaranteed after graduation so my efforts have a result instead of sitting at home not finding a job. Also it is a suitable job for women." Noor indicates the importance of guaranteed work over any real choice: "I wanted to study the English language and there were two options: either I enrol in the College of Arts or the College of Education. So, I decided to enrol in the College of Education because the job is

secured immediately after graduation.” Importantly, these guarantees come with attractive working conditions. Meera, with hidden regret, says she never wanted to be a teacher; again the College of Arts was her first choice, but the guarantee of work was the decisive factor: “I wanted to study English in the College of Arts but I was told there were no secure jobs for this specialization So, I studied in the College of Education although I didn’t want to be a teacher but at least the job was secured.”

Now (2003) an increasing number of Omani females are entering other careers, in the past considered unsuitable – such as working in the government or industrial and service sectors. “The Omani labour market has witnessed growing involvement of women in economic activity and workforce during the past years. The accelerating participation of Omani women in business is attuned to the significant role of women in working side by side with men, contributing to family income and improving their standard of living.” (UNICEF, 2000: 29) Society is slowly changing, coming to accept other careers for women, but teaching continues to be the favoured option for many. Certainly family pressure and social traditions are not the only reasons Omani females go into teaching, though they may still be powerful. Extrinsic factors, such as immediate placement and attractive work conditions, including the salary and long holidays, are crucial reasons women become teachers in Oman.

6.3. Being a Female Teacher in Oman: Effects on Commitment

Commitment is a key condition for productive work. However, not all employees are committed to their jobs. During my interviews I was puzzled by teachers’ reluctance to discuss technical aspects of their jobs, such as how they overcome problems of slow learners in classes; respondents were happier to elaborate on personal and social aspects. This could have been an “interviewer effect” – interviewees, in this case, could have felt threatened being interviewed by a person researching a higher degree and therefore resorted to “securing” themselves by not exposing their professional practices. I got the impression that respondents looked at teaching as a job to be done: merely an income source. This was further enforced by the questionnaire data which revealed that 44.7% of respondents continue to be teachers because of the salary, and show little professional involvement in their careers. Many voiced a strong wish to change jobs,

especially into school administration. Some also expressed unhappiness with their careers or feelings of indifference to their jobs. The frequency with which such remarks were made, even by some trainees and novices, invites discussion of the reasons behind such attitudes – such as large class sizes or rigid curricula. A deeper analysis of the research data signals a general perception among female teachers in Oman of teaching as a mechanical task, in which they should invest minimal time and effort. Using gender as an analytical lens provides interesting perspectives on this issue.

6.3.1. Gender, Motives to Join Teaching and Commitment to Teaching

Many factors interact to make the experiences of these teachers in some ways similar to, in others different from experiences of other teachers in different contexts. Insufficient interest in teaching, lack of support, the absence of an inspirational environment in which to blossom, and society's attitudes to women's careers can all interact to breed a lack of serious career commitment. Safa has been a teacher for only three years, yet already she seems to have reached a plateau in her career. Although she was initially interested in teaching, the differences between her ideas about teaching and the reality have discouraged her. I asked her to elaborate on some questionnaire answers.

A: How do you feel about being a teacher? Do you love teaching?

S: I feel indifferent but I will not choose another job

A: In the questionnaire you said that you are 50% happy and 50% unhappy as a teacher. Do you think your feelings will change to be less than 50% happy with teaching?

S: No, I think it would stay the same

A: Don't you think that this feeling will exhaust you?

S: Not really. It makes no difference. The majority of teachers are like this. There are teachers who hate teaching and wait to complete eight years to get an early retirement.

A: Do you think that you will reach this state?

S: I don't know. Teaching has become part of my life. I don't think I could stay at home because during the summer I start missing school after just the first month of the holiday. It keeps me busy with something.

Safa seems to settle her troubled conscience by convincing herself that she is not the only one with such an attitude: she sees herself as probably better, in both a pedagogic and moral sense, than others who "hate" teaching and are waiting impatiently for early retirement. She feels an indifference – what elsewhere I have called dislocation – and

this feeling, she believes, has no deep, negative impact on her pedagogy. But it must have some effect: this is a woman for whom teaching “had become part of [her] life”, who “miss[es] school” during holidays, but only because “it keeps me busy with something”. She acknowledges that “it makes no difference” that she is “indifferent”, and, towards the end of the interview, Safa confessed to having considered leaving, but for financial reasons decided to stay. This suggests a teacher who has adapted to a routine which she finds comforting at a superficial level, but which offers no deeper rewards, a teacher who is simply going through the motions of teaching because it stops her thinking. The attitude may be frequent among female teachers who have found themselves constrained by social and familial circumstances to do something in which they feel little or no interest. This may result in a poorly-developed pedagogy, or one that has little chances of development.

There seems to be a relationship between a teacher’s motives to join teaching and her commitment to her career at later stages, although earlier research findings were not consistent in this respect. Whether this relationship is linear is not yet evident. Farrugia (1986) believes there is a link between teachers’ career choices and their commitment to the job. Initial career attitudes, or a predisposition to teach, are useful in examining later career choices, or the decision to stay within or leave teaching – although these attitudes may either be reinforced or transformed through experiences in the workplace. (Yee, 1990) My study found a strong association between reasons to join teaching and quitting. Those who joined for socio-cultural or extrinsic reasons were more likely to think of quitting than those who joined for intrinsic motives (see 4.8.2).

The majority of respondents became teachers for socio-cultural reasons, such as teaching being a convenient career for women. Many openly said they had not considered whether teaching was the right job: most began work thinking it an easy job. Very few expressed a vocation, or thought teaching enjoyable. Choosing teaching because of its “moral mission” was never mentioned as a career motive.

Drifting into teaching for non-vocational reasons might not be an ideal precondition for commitment. There may be a great deal of convenience associated with teaching, but if the woman feels she has been backed into a career and thus deprived of an adequate

spectrum of choice, regret and psychological dislocation are inevitable. Heba is another example of a woman choosing her career on the basis of others' expectations; a choice she deeply regrets. 'Frankly, I didn't choose teaching because I liked it. I just went with the general direction. I grew up knowing there was no other field for women except teaching and medicine: to either be a nurse, a doctor or a teacher.'

My research shows clearly the relationship between a teacher's initial career motives, and her subsequent attitudes (see 5.2.3.3). Teachers who are positively motivated initially, tend to show a sustained interest despite, in most cases, being in what they say is a discouraging school environment. Teachers who join the profession for other reasons tend to continue to be less interested, and hence are less involved in their careers, and seem happy to do the minimum, displaying little willingness to invest more in their pedagogy: Haya, who became a teacher because she had no option, is one example. After ten years in teaching, during which she has constantly tried to find other suitable careers, Haya cannot wait to leave. She keeps this no secret from colleagues, to whom she complains about being forced, for financial reasons, to continue as a teacher. She acknowledges these feeling have affected her general attitude to both her job and her pupils.

- A. Would you choose teaching if you were given the chance again?
- H. Without thinking I will not choose teaching because I did not want to get into this field.
- A. Why are you still a teacher if you feel this negative about it?
- H. Financial obligations and I got used to working outside the home. Most employers do not want women employees and teaching is suitable for women especially the long holidays.

How a teacher feels about teaching I found was related to why she remains in it. Teachers who remain for financial reasons or for lack of other options, tend to have more negative feelings towards pedagogy (see 4.6). Those who become teachers because of vocational commitment show more interest, enthusiasm and involvement: to those teachers, their work is more than just a job – they get satisfaction from helping their pupils learn, and are positive in the face of difficulties. Five interviewee teachers had initially been interested in a teaching career, and showed, with variations, different attitudes and perceptions of their jobs from other respondents; they showed awareness

of the fact that being interested, and maintaining that interest is the main reason they enjoy teaching, and the reason they are more committed to it than other teachers. This might be significant when recruiting teachers, and also points to the role pre-service training plays in fostering positive, professional attitudes. I found that training courses did not seem to have had an influence on teachers' initial attitudes. In line with previous research (for example, Boglar, 2002) my respondents maintained that the school environment plays a key role in fostering and maintaining positive attitudes.

6.3.2. Marriage, Motherhood and Commitment to Teaching

Although female education has altered the typical marriage age for women in Oman, most get married immediately after graduation, and the majority opt for a child immediately. In general, most have had a child by the end of the first year of marriage. 76.9% of the questionnaire sample between 25 and 29 were married; 84.2% of the age group 30+ were married (see 4.2). Although female education and work are increasingly valued in Omani society, traditional values still attach more significance to a woman's role as a wife and mother; an education or a career does not replace the other significant roles. An interesting finding of this research was how single teachers show more interest in their pedagogic roles than married colleagues with children. It seems that the responsibility of additional roles of wife and mother has a negative effect on a woman's involvement in her career: 45.2% of married teachers saw their familial roles as taking precedence over their careers, compared with 13.7% of single teachers. Married teachers with children admit family life affects their professional role, and does so in a negative way (see 4.5).

Women experience a turning point in their personal lives as well as their working lives with the arrival of children, and this parental status may divide women (Arber et al., 1992). Children may have a more substantial effect on a woman's career than marital status, and their arrival has great consequences for the working mother. Hall (1996, cited by Bhalalusesa, 1998) points out that the demands of children have a great influence over women's career development. This influence may, in career terms, be negative.

Women's family responsibilities can severely limit their careers in ways that do not generally affect men. Women tend to choose occupations that are compatible with their family's needs. They also limit their aspirations for career advancement, reduce their behavioural and psychological involvement in work, adjust their work schedules for family reasons, and turn down opportunities for career development and growth that would interfere with their family responsibilities. (Greenhaus et al., 1999: 409)

Working Omani women, represented in my research by teachers, are in that sense not different from working women elsewhere. Despite teaching being chosen by women mainly because it fits with the roles of wife and/or mother, the amount of time and effort put into her role as teacher changes, and is expected to change once a teacher starts her own family: this was supported by all respondents in both the questionnaire and interviews – “a high level of involvement in one role is usually associated with a lower level of involvement in another role”. (ibid: 400) The majority of interviewees' responses confirm this. Single and married teachers alike talked about how having a family can change a woman's priorities and result in less career involvement: 78.3% of both single and married respondents believed children and family should be the priority in any woman's life; 44.4% agreed that working women often risk the stability of family life, and 59.3% said their family lives affect their professional lives – 77.9% of those were married (see 4.5). Single teachers, not yet having gone through the experience, were expecting to move teaching to a secondary position once they had their own families. Teachers accept that, due to familial pressures, they will inevitably gradually lose interest in their job; colleagues' influence is apparent here. “I think next year my interest will be less and even less in the years to come. I see my colleagues lose interest in teaching when they get married. They tell me that only during the early years as a teacher that one is enthusiastic.” (Bushra) Enthusiasm is a delicate commodity, and may well be easily undermined, or as in this case diverted, by the views or practices of others. There is little belief among respondents that career and family can somehow be balanced.

A. You are single now. Do you think things would change when you become a wife and/or a mother?

M. Yes, because I see my colleagues. Married ones with children have no time to think how to develop their teaching. I saw this with my sisters who are both teachers as well. I used to like the way my eldest sister used to carefully and

creatively prepare her lessons. Now it is routine to her. I don't want to end up this way, but I don't know what to do. (Meera)

Another single teacher shares the same expectation, repeating the received wisdom of the staffroom, and perhaps the family, yet filled with regret for what, she considers, is the inevitable.

A1. Will marriage have a negative effect on your job?

A2. Sure it will. Logically and to be realistic I can see that it would affect me as a teacher and that I might change although I don't want to. When you have more responsibilities, you have more pressure especially when there are children involved ... it won't be the same as now when I have nothing but teaching to occupy my mind. I have no responsibilities when I go home now; therefore, I can concentrate on teaching. I am always the first one of my colleagues to finish marking for example. (Aneesha)

One aspect of the social constraints discovered among respondents is the lack of any deep reflective criticism of their present and future situation when it comes to "the inevitable". There is evidence that, despite having the opportunity to pursue a career, Omani women still view their main role as familial, and this may cause an interesting situation: women feel trapped between government policies, that encourage more female participation in public life, and the traditional views parts of society hold of their roles. My sample comes exclusively from the "renaissance generation" – those who benefited from modern education – and there is a considerable educational, social and psychological gap between them and most of their parents, who are often illiterate or, at best, under-educated. These parents remain the guardians of a deep-rooted belief system, and represent a polar opposite to the policies of government. In such circumstances it may not be unfair to suggest that women develop a certain amount of socio-cultural schizophrenia. In the end this situation probably resolves itself in the easiest solution for the woman, and there is a "lack of interest in work, among many [Omani] women, particularly after marriage." (UNICEF, 2000: 31) This is thus not simply related to an upbringing that stresses a woman's primary domesticity, but rather to a desire to avoid a cultural paradox in which the woman finds herself trapped.

Bhalalusesa (1998) studied six overseas female PhD students, from different developing countries, pursuing their higher studies in the UK. Her research focused on why and

how these women made decisions concerning familial roles and career/professional development: traditional values and cultural expectations are significant factors in career development, and there is “a range of role conflict inherent in deeper female career commitment. The conflict is based on the traditional values attached to the institution of marriage and the cultural expectations of a woman as a wife and mother.” (ibid: 29) Since the working mothers in Bhalalusesa’s research seemed to experience what she calls “role conflict” this offers insights into the findings of my research. I found married teachers with children talked about finding neither enough time nor energy for both roles. New mothers, especially, felt guilty because they had to leave their children with someone else, especially in Muscat, with a live-in nanny when they went to work. This nanny becomes an embodiment of all the guilt career mothers feel, and unlike an abstract feeling of guilt may not so easily be dismissed. Also, a person, unlike a day care centre or nursery is more likely to revive feelings of personal inadequacy. Safa is a mother of two children below the age of three, and she worries deeply about her children while she is working.

I feel I should be at home with the children. I feel guilty at times especially when I come back from work feeling tired and have to keep my son out of my bedroom. I feel sorry for him but at the same time I feel tired. I discussed the idea of staying home with my husband but there wasn’t a real intention to do that. I need the salary because we need to build a house. (Safa)

Guilt, compounded by the financial and other dilemmas, is common among working mothers. “At work [the working mother] feels guilty about not being a good enough mother, and not spending more time with her children; because she has children she also suffers guilt at not working hard enough in her job. In both quarters working women feel compromised and inadequate.” (Figes, 1994:78)

The majority of respondents (78.3%) believed that children and family should be a priority for women, and 44.4% believed working women often risked the stability of their families. This might suggest that there would be a strong prioritizing of roles, with familial duties coming first: however, 49.7% were reluctant to admit that their domestic role is prior to their role as teachers. There seem to be flexible boundaries developed by these women to cope with the stresses created by the two worlds in which many live, one determined by the familial, the other by a wider, social environment.

New mothers, predictably, show more concern for the welfare of their young children while they are at work - “when my children were very young I was more concerned about them. I did suffer a lot as a working mother then.” (Maha) Teachers with older children show less concern. The reason may be that more experience – they may have more than one child – means they have established a comfortable routine of child care and with it a comfortable philosophy to offset or displace the guilt. Also, as children grow and go to school, the problems of care are markedly reduced.

Working women in Oman, and in other of the Gulf states, may be luckier than working women in other parts of the developing world with regard to childcare: childcare is not a particularly problematic issue because cheap labour is readily available from countries in the Asian sub-continent (specifically India, Sri Lanka and the Philippines). Although the availability of such labour can make the lives of working mothers easier than counterparts elsewhere, the use of expatriate labour brings its own concerns. On the macro scale, expatriate labour only magnifies or compounds the rentier effects already mentioned: people become used to relying on others. On the micro scale, the domestic labour employed is, in many cases, taken from poorly educated groups, and these people are also from different cultural, religious and social backgrounds: both these factors are likely to exacerbate maternal guilt, and worsen any sense of critical social pressures. Many nannies are unqualified, and the quality of care children receive in the absence of parents may be very poor. Alternatives, in the form of support services for working women such as properly inspected nurseries or kindergartens are very few, relatively expensive and poorly regulated. (Almusalami, 1995 and UNICEF, 1995) Issues of qualification and adequacy have not yet been addressed in legislation, but it seems inevitable that concerns which currently exist on a domestic front will, eventually, even in Oman, come into the political arena.

Just as material rewards are not the only incentive for working, neither are they the only incentive for mothers to start or return to work. Gaston (1991) suggests that women value employment because it provides them with an escape from domestic captivity, physical and psychological, as well as giving them a chance to be socially involved – this was expressed by some respondents, for whom going out to work is not just a means to financial reward but also, and perhaps more importantly, a way to socialize in

an engaged and meaningful way. Many indicated that work provides them with the opportunity to meet people and make friends. Basically the pleasure of socialization is built on the fact that it occurs outside the domestic environment: this is a pleasure with a distinct, though implicit, ideological edge – the limits of the family are acknowledged. Reem is adamant about why she cannot stop teaching – “it is impossible for me to stay home.” Other teachers – Asma, Haya, Amani and Safa – explained how they never could stay at home and become housewives: commitment to teaching as a reason not to abandon their careers was not mentioned. It was the social school environment they perceived was important.

It might be expected then that women experience less satisfaction with jobs that are only taken as an alternative to domesticity. However, research on working women indicates that women generally express more satisfaction with work than do men (Greenhaus et al. 1999; Stockman et al. 1995 and Kremer, 1993). Perhaps women are more satisfied with their jobs, despite lower rewards in terms of pay or promotion, because of lower personal investment in that work, and a generally lower expectation of its value (Stockman et al. 1995). Kremer (1993: 215) argues that “individuals of either sex, may record satisfaction with their jobs not if they achieve, succeed or ‘grow’ at work but merely if their work is convenient for them, leaves them free time for other activities and if it meets their basic needs.” These explanations help us understand why, despite, in most cases, being drawn into teaching for various reasons other than a vocational interest, 55.3% of the questionnaire respondents stated they are generally happy with their teaching careers, and 46.6% said they would choose teaching again. Many interviewees expressed their irritation with having to follow a rigid curriculum, but when asked whether they would prefer to take more responsibility in selecting and teaching lessons the majority were reluctant. It was apparent that, despite complaints, they were generally happy to put the blame on others when things went awry. Perhaps respondents are happy not having to shoulder more responsibility, since this gives them more time with their families. Differences between single and married teachers are noticeable in this context. This issue will be discussed at length in chapter seven. This level of dislocation suggests not job satisfaction but “job comfort” as Evans (1999) calls it.

6.4. Summary of Chapter

This chapter has dealt with the second set of research questions regarding the motives behind Omani women's preference for teaching as a career. Gender has emerged as an underlying factor in their choice of a teaching career: social influences related to gender are linked with the perceived compatibility of teaching with women's familial roles and the notion of the 'convenience' of the teaching career. The chapter illustrates the effects of initial motives to teach on the development of job commitment: those motivated by intrinsic reasons showed more commitment than those motivated by cultural or extrinsic factors. However, the relationship between initial motives and commitment to the job cannot be described as linear; it is rather cyclical: individual teachers' practical experiences may alter their initial attitudes to and perceptions of teaching.

Overall, rather than acting as a positive change, opening the workplace to women in Oman could be viewed as placing them in a difficult, indeed paradoxical situation. "There are certain traditions that we need to stick to otherwise society will look at us 'differently'. Of course a girl's reputation is crucial 'in our context'." (Bushra) In the short to medium terms this is unlikely to change, and women will experience increased levels of stress as they try to cope with not only a proliferation of roles, but also a proliferation of expectations – from others as well as from themselves. Women who enter teaching without feeling it is anything except a practical choice, or who are coerced in some way, will feel the demands of being a woman, a wife, a mother and a teacher difficult to reconcile.

Omani women have been granted the right to education (which did not exist before 1970), the right to participate in public and political life; the right of employment equal to men. It should be considered that these rights were not fought for, but "granted". As such they may not have yet come to be appreciated in any fundamental way. Also, there are many structural deficits such as a lack of flexible working hours or patterns (no part-time work is allowed), and, very importantly, the lack of any qualified childcare facilities. These deficits make it hard for women who want a professional life after they start their families, and result in a "role conflict". This conflict at a personal level is compounded by powerful social beliefs about the "suitability" of women's roles.

Concepts of suitability, coupled with an almost anti-feminine design of working time (rather than simply neutral or male-orientated), creates among working women a feeling of being trapped, whether they have a job or not. The problem may be that the provision of women rights needs to be engineered by women, which would allow the development of more and better support for new and evolving female roles. The granting of appropriate rights is a beginning not a completion; work structures and the ideologies surrounding them need to be adjusted appropriately, to ease the different pressures on working women.

Chapter Seven: *Teacher Satisfaction - the Case of Omani Teachers*

7.1. Introduction

This chapter attempts to answer the third research question relating to the levels of job satisfaction that teachers experience – to what extent Omani female teachers are satisfied with their jobs, and what the determinants and sources of job satisfaction are.

The research was initially concerned with the career stages Omani female teachers move through during their careers, part of the data generated by the questionnaires focused on the issue of career satisfaction. The interview data on teacher satisfaction was particularly rich however, reflecting the importance of satisfaction to respondents. Literature on job satisfaction needed to be revisited and extended (see 2.4) therefore. The research process was iterative, not linear. Questionnaires give a snapshot of Omani teachers' sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, using a relatively large percentage of respondents; open-ended questions in the interviews help illuminate specific teaching elements, or more general points teachers themselves felt were crucial.

I have demonstrated that the effect of contextual factors is prominent. One of the contributions of studies from different social contexts is challenging the applicability and generalizability of existing theoretical models, and developing contextually relevant referents. I shall argue that this study has identified a need for more studies of teacher job satisfaction, most especially in different cultural contexts, and specifically in developmental contexts. A comparison between teachers across cultures would address the question of transferability of research findings, and this in turn would provide wider and deeper understandings.

7.2. What Satisfies Omani Teachers? The Salience of Social Relationships and Human Interaction

Teaching is different from non-service professions because social relations are the core of the work, and its *raison d'être*. According to Gabriel (1957: 213) “teaching has its roots in human relationships, and these are seen as sources of both the pleasure and the strain of teaching.” Much of the satisfaction teachers feel is either directly or indirectly related to their relationships with others on the school premises. As one of my interviewees puts it “Teaching is not just a job one does. It involves a lot of human relationships. It isn’t like any other job.” (Aseel)

Analysing the interview data pointed out the prominence of social interaction in creating and sustaining satisfaction. Interaction within a collegiate setting takes both professional and personal forms: teachers’ relationships with management are professional, while relationships with colleagues and pupils have both personal and professional dimensions. Although there were some variations at different career stages; career stage did not greatly affect job satisfaction. Different groups are key at different phases of teachers’ careers: pupils are considered centrally important for trainees and novices; more experienced teachers gain satisfaction from their relationships with colleagues.

7.2.1. Pupils’ Role in Teacher Job Satisfaction

I found that teachers consider a good relationship with their pupils essential for a successful teaching and learning environment. Research (Evans and Mass, 1969; Kasten, 1984 and Hean and Garrett, 2001) maintains that teachers attach great importance and gain significant satisfaction from relationships with pupils: many are attracted to teaching because it involves working with young people. Sikes, Measor and Woods (1985: 155) believe that “pupils are undoubtedly an important influence upon teachers’ career perceptions and experiences.” The influence may be creative, inspiring and challenging teachers. It is not surprising that Omani teachers attach importance to these relationships, perhaps more so because these relationships act as in lieu of wider social contact which may be difficult for females to achieve. When asked to choose

sources of satisfaction, 58.4% of questionnaire respondents chose “When you feel your pupils have understood what you were trying to explain” as a key moment, followed by 49.5% who chose “Seeing your pupils’ success”. These teachers seem to achieve fulfilment from intrinsic rewards - from the feeling that they have achieved their task. Conversely, unmotivated pupils were the second most commonly cited source of teacher dissatisfaction – cited by 37.4% of the sample. Unmotivated pupils influence teachers’ effectiveness – obviously being able to communicate successfully is essential. Though the importance of pupils in teachers’ sense of career satisfaction was evident regardless of experience, it was highly articulated in trainees’ and novices’ responses. It is possible that this emphasis on the satisfaction obtained from pupils in part results from a lack of other rewards, and also from the narrowness of a female teacher’s social range.

Although trainees’ and teachers’ relationships with pupils were touched on in chapter 5, this discussion aims at explaining the elements of these relationships across three main groups: trainees, novices and experienced teachers, highlighting pupils’ roles in providing teachers’ satisfaction.

7.2.1.1. Trainees: Gaining Acceptance

Both the questionnaire and interview data underline the centrality of pupils, and of pupils’ perception of them, to trainees’ practical experience and satisfaction. To trainees their pupils are the people who matter the most at school, and the interviews yield more detailed data about the specific nature of this relationship. Guillaume and Rudney (1993) find that “satisfying relationships with their pupils occupied a significant portion of student teachers’ writings about the classroom.” (ibid: 72) This was true for all trainees in my research regardless of how intrinsically, culturally or extrinsically they were initially motivated to become teachers. It is possible that the complexion of the importance of pupils to their teachers may differ between cultures, with single sex environments also affecting the nature of satisfaction.

There are many dimensions to the way trainees in this study perceive their relationship with pupils: pupils are judges of their competency as teachers; they are important influences in boosting self-confidence, either through their academic achievement such

as doing well in tests or by showing their fondness for their teachers; the respect pupils display towards trainees helps reaffirm their status as professionals in the school setting. Farah describes her pupils' reaction to her during TP. She says, "They respected us although we were trainees and they loved us more than their own teachers." Clearly pupils have a great short-term influence over trainees' motivation and a long-term one over their future attitude towards teaching, and for each of these positive influences there is a negative alternative that may have detrimental effects. Faten explains that her feelings of satisfaction come from her positive experience of TP, especially the way her pupils interacted with her in class; she believes this affected her decision to continue teaching, although initially she joined because of peer pressure.

Trainees consider their pupils a thermometer of their success. Su (1990) reported that two-thirds of the trainees she interviewed relied on their pupils as the most important "reference" to judge their pedagogic effectiveness. Shama, a trainee, considers "pupils [are] the most important people in school to me. They either encourage me or frustrate me even with a look from them." In a way, the pupils are occupying the role usually reserved for the employer – their approbation is the acid test any teacher must pass, particularly during the novitiate, but also continually through their careers. Shama trains in schools twice weekly, and is considered an outstanding trainee by her co-operating teachers and university supervisors. Although she may be exaggerating when she speaks about her pupils, the forcefulness of her expressions shows how important they are, and this is typical. They also show some of the emotional pressure the need for approbation creates, and the distorting effects on pedagogy of a disproportionate reliance on such approbation. In the Omani context, where proper supervision may be absent, and collegiate support weak, the position of pupils as motivators and indicators of pedagogic success will be proportionately increased.

They used to love me. Our relation was excellent. I used to love going to the schools because of them. They kept asking about my news even after I finished my training in their school. They kept calling me and sending me cards and presents. Their love and attention used to provide me with self-confidence. It made me feel that my personality qualifies me to deal with pupils and a good indicator of my ability as a good teacher. (Amina)

Amina is conscious of the effects of her good relationship with her pupils on her self-

confidence and general attitude towards teaching. She seems to link the ability to gain pupils' love to being a good teacher. But her remarks are evidence of the fickle nature of pupil approbation: "used to" is a particularly poignant modal in this context. Succeeding in winning students' emotional attachment seems, for many teachers, to be an essential skill and measure of competency. Since trainees deal with pupils more intensively than with others in the school, over the short periods they are there, they become anxious to test that skill and prove, to themselves and others, how they can establish such a rapport. Trainees' eagerness to obtain pupils' approval is not an aim in itself but rather a way to achieve other objectives – perhaps ensuring a pleasant teaching experience for themselves. Trainees are aware that they have no real authority; the obvious recourse they have is to gain attention and response through establishing those emotional ties more usual between friends. Noor explains the advantage of being nice with the pupils "It is better to gain their affection then they will willingly do what we ask them to do."

There is another side to this relationship. Bayan, a trainee, is very motivated and determined to teach well and effectively. She advocates strong relationships between teachers and pupils because she feels that, currently, such relationships are "non-existent". She believes strong relationships with pupils are the key to communication and to learning, although she does not spell this out.

Once I was playing sport with my pupils and they told me that other students in the school envy them because I come to teach them. I felt extremely happy and that I have done something special. When I use new methods or new visual aids and see that my pupils are interested I feel happy and proud. I feel that my pupils are on my side. (Bayan)

Bayan's use of the phrase "my pupils on my side", most particularly the use of the possessive adjective in this context, marks a distinct stage in trainees' development characterised by having an interdependent sense of "belonging". During this stage the trainee moves from the stage of being an observer to becoming a participant, an essential part of which is being recognized by pupils as a teacher, not just a trainee (McNally, Cope, Inglis and Stronach, 1994). Although Bahiya uses "my", this closeness was not indicated by every trainee: some referred simply to "the pupils", especially those trainees who did not have a good rapport with their classes. This could indicate that some trainees move through their professional development stages quicker than

others: this stage of “belonging” is documented in studies of novice teachers rather than trainees (Carre, 1993). It could also indicate that, in the Omani context, this accelerated movement is more usual for reasons already outlined (see 5.2.1.2.3 and 5.2.2.3) and there is a clear need for some kind of feedback regarding pedagogic success. There is already an emotional vulnerability among trainees and novices and this may be exaggerated by the lack of support, and create a disproportionate need for emotional ties with students. Nevertheless, having pupils “on their side” is one way to feel secure, and feeling pupils enjoy or appreciate what they do has a motivating effect on trainees, and works as a validating agent for their pedagogy. Most trainees report feeling they are being constantly evaluated by everyone in the school, including their pupils: getting those with whom they spend almost all their training time “on their side” makes for a feeling of security, at least in this one aspect. In a study by McNally et al. (1994) on the experiences of twenty-two student teachers undergoing teaching practice in UK secondary schools, the authors state that some of the trainees who suffered unhappy experiences reported the absence of a secure personal rapport with their pupils as the major cause of dissatisfaction with the training experience. They conclude that “achieving teacher status in the eyes of pupils conveyed a powerful message to students about both professional credibility and personal fulfilment.” (ibid: 222)

In many cases, students show greater interest in the trainees than in their own teachers. This is understandable since they only meet once a week, during which period the trainees offer a new or fresh approach to teaching, and also treat the pupils differently. Haya explains that when she was a trainee in 1989, her pupils used to enjoy her lessons more than their class teacher’s because “we were new and young. We liked to play with them unlike their teachers. We treated them differently, unlike the way their teachers treated them. We were more lenient with them in class.” Some trainees report that their pupils await their visit every week and some say their pupils even share their personal problems with them. Many get cards, flowers and presents, especially on Teacher’s Day (27th February) and even when they finish training some pupils keep in contact. Perhaps being young and more enthusiastic is what attracts pupils to trainees and novices alike. This was previously found by Lortie (1975) and Hean and Garrett (2001).

In effect, most trainees identify more with their pupils than they do with the teachers' community in the school setting: the weaker the collegiate community at staff room and supervisory levels, the stronger the bonds forged in the classroom are likely to be. It can also be the result of lacking a full or practical sense of responsibility for pupils' learning and well-being. Meeting their classes for short periods does not give them a real picture of teaching, of the pressures and frustrations inherent: they are more like observers than participants. Any pre-service training programme needs to address this sense of belonging, while offering a practical rather than ideal sense of what teaching is all about. Strong emotional ties established initially may not be sustainable in later career stages, and memories of such ties later may cause teachers to be less connected to their classes and more cynical about teaching. Sustainable pedagogic techniques are not built on short-term emotional friendships.

7.2.1.2. Novices: Strengthening the Ties

Research on novices (for example, Flores, 2001) shows that they emphasize the significance of the interaction among people in the school, and novices see their pupils in much the same way trainees see theirs. Being new and in an unfamiliar environment (Burn et al., 2000) performing a role for the first time in their lives can be a frightening experience for many. In this context, most seek to feel comfortable quickly, and since they deal for most of their working days with pupils, the majority feels that these are the first obstacles to be tackled: they must get their pupils on their sides, "win" pupils' affection and attention, tending to be friendlier with, and showing more attention to pupils than do the more experienced teachers. It is interesting how novices tend to form close relationships with their pupils and in some cases develop friendships. Some novices, in my research, report that they did not feel very different than when they were student teachers with regard to such relationships. "I didn't feel my first year was much different from my teaching practice experience. Just extra classes to teach." (Aneesa) This could be because many of the concerns of trainees during TP continue into the first year of teaching (Kyriacou et al, 1999). Witnessing pupils' growing understanding, success and progress provides types and degrees of fulfilment. Aneesa, a novice, describes her relationship with pupils as "strong" because "I see them daily and I know every pupil's problem The pupils are fond of me. I am very comfortable in

teaching.” She goes on to say she gets satisfaction from her positive relationships with pupils: “when I feel that pupils love me, it makes me feel that I am doing something important.”

Having their own pupils for the first time is a fundamental experience, and taking sole responsibility for classes can be as fulfilling as much as it is challenging. Most new teachers’ experience at school revolves around their pupils, but as I already noted short-term emotional contacts decay easily.

A: Tell me about your first year in teaching.

A2: My sister-in-law used always to tell me that I kept talking about my pupils all the time and not about my colleagues. She noticed that. Now she does not hear me talking about my pupils. (Amani)

Amani’s statement reflects the change in teachers’ relationship with their pupils as they grow in experience, and the dynamic of dependence becomes one of engineering cooperation. Most teachers are aware of how important pupils are, and understand that if they want to enjoy a successful or at least endurable teaching experience, they will need their pupils’ co-operation. “Because teachers’ work consists of affecting their students, they are dependent on their students both for the actual success of their work and for evidence of that success.” (Metz, 1993:130)

The enthusiasm, vitality and friendliness most novices start out with makes them attractive to pupils; perhaps they share similar interests with their pupils, especially if they teach at secondary level. But winning pupils over may displace learning in some pupils’ minds with the fulfilment of emotional needs: this is even more likely in a rigorously sexually demarcated society. Female pupils’ emotional attraction to their female teachers, especially new ones, is a well-known phenomenon in Oman. The high number of attachments, and their intensity, to the level of obsessions, may be as excessive as they are professionally undesirable. It is clear that not only are there possibilities of impropriety (real or perceived may be equally damaging), but such relationships can result in a teacher losing authority, as the distance needed to maintain authority is corrupted. The disapproval of other teachers may dissuade novices from

attachments such as these, after all they want to look like professionals, and get other teachers to respect them as such. Without wishing to digress into a complex area which, because of its association with sexuality and sexual “propriety”, which excites considerable subjective passion and controversy especially in the US and Europe, it is important in the specific context of Oman to admit this phenomenon. Maha tells us about her relationship with her pupils during her first year in teaching: there is innocence about her responses that would be unlikely from a European respondent.

M. ... [B]y the end of the year I had a “lover” [laughs]. A girl kept coming and looking at me [in the staff room] and sending me letters. I was happy for the attention at first, but later I felt pupils are boring ... I kept wondering why we weren’t like this as pupils. I never remember falling in love with one of my teachers. I liked one but not to this extent. I didn’t even show her that I liked her. Can you see how the relationship between pupils and teachers came to be? There is no respect for the teacher any more. Yes I was happy to feel adorable She used to tell me her problems, but experienced teachers in the school then, advised me against giving her the chance to. I used to feel sorry for her.

A. Do you now think they were right to advise you that way?

M. Yes, but I don’t know why if a pupil has problems and tells you, you are not supposed to help her. After all, you are not losing anything by doing so.

Maha is clearly confused, and contradicts herself: she wonders why one is not supposed to help pupils with personal problems, and feels dislocated by her own, rather different memories of being a pupil. She says that pupils are “boring”, indicating her own disenchantment rather than any objective perception. This disenchantment is displayed throughout her interview in her emphasized reluctance to be personally close to pupils, and in her lack of any resolution to the problem of offering adequate advice. One very clear aspect of Maha’s comment’s is her professional detachment, evidenced in her clichéd responses about the past, and her lack of any insights regarding how to help pupils with “problems”. The first challenge seems never to have been fully met, or understood by Maha.

One main difference between trainees and novices is the real authority novices enjoy over their pupils (see 5.2.2.5). This authority does not guarantee pupils’ affection, but, it does mean pupils will respect the novice more, knowing she can exercise power in the

form of grading, for example. The authority of a novice means pupils pay more attention and behave better; also novices develop feelings of responsibility to their pupils' learning – being the “real” teacher brings with it duties, and a major step to becoming a professional is assuming such responsibility. Novices are fulfilled when they see their pupils' progress, rather than just monitoring their grades through tests or through class interaction. New teachers use certain identifiable terms when talking about their relationships with pupils: “different”, “serious”, “I know them better”, “I feel responsible” and “I feel happy when they show progress”.

There are a number of reasons trainees and novices tend to form closer relationships with pupils than with colleagues. As strangers, unwelcome in the new school environment, there is a natural empathy for others who feel disadvantaged or overawed by the collegiate surroundings; they might feel the other teachers do not take them seriously – they are merely trainees or novices - pupils give a sense of responsibility and maturity, and may not so easily judge them to be naive; they might consider winning pupils over more important, perhaps less challenging, than gaining colleagues' friendships; finally, new teachers usually have a heavy workload, and prioritize developing their pedagogic skills, which involves developing contacts with pupils, rather than socializing with other teachers.

7.2.1.3. Experienced Teachers: A Sense of Distance

More experienced teachers continue to consider their pupils important, however, pupils cease to form the centre of their activity in school. Experienced teachers gradually move on to a different team than their pupils', and relate more than trainees or novices to the teachers' collegiate community.

The relationship changes to one based on “legitimate authority” rather than “friendship”, especially in the case of married teachers with children: the relationship becomes more formal and professional. Amina admits her relationship with pupils has undergone a metamorphosis. “It used to be much friendlier in the past. Now it is more formal.” There is a distinct note of regret here, rather than a positive embracing of professionalism. Not only do teachers' emotional dependence on their pupils decrease, but their detachment

may increase, and their use of authority exceed usual definitions of legitimate. Some teachers go to extremes: Amani confesses certain psychological changes since she became a teacher four years before.

Even my psyche and my relationship with my pupils [have changed]. I am one of those teachers pupils fear. ... My pupils are the most important to me. Why am I in school then? If they understand the lessons and do well in exams then I have done my duty.

“Fear” and “duty” have replaced earlier experiences of friendship. Pupils are important to tell teachers, whether directly or indirectly through their successes, that they are good. Pupils are no longer part of the social circle which now consists mainly of teachers’ own colleagues. Perhaps growing feelings of security and confidence result in less reliance on pupils as a reference group, although at the same time teachers still admit the importance of pupils’ feedback and active participation in their feelings of satisfaction with their career. Could the failure of pupils to provoke teachers’ emotional interest signal pedagogic disinterest, a step to reaching a professional plateau, or a sign of early burn out?

Although pupils can be a reason for teachers to feel good about teaching, they can also be a source of frustration. “My pupils play an important part in my life but within the classroom borders only. They encourage me to work harder when they participate and interact with me in the classroom. However, if they don’t they frustrate me.” (Haya) Pupils’ significance for experienced teachers is restricted to their fitting in to a controlled, perhaps predictable classroom situation.

Having a positive relationship with pupils helps sustain teachers’ motivation, and intrinsically motivated teachers continue to view their rapport with pupils as essential. Sara believes that pupils’ affection was a key motivator: “... that’s what made me like teaching even more, the pupils’ love for me, it encourages and eases the tension.” She believes their “love” acts as a motivating force for her in what she describes as a demotivating school environment, while simultaneously easing stress. This teacher, and others, considers the relationship with pupils important in forming or changing attitudes to teaching, and enjoying a good set of relationships has the pleasant effect of allowing the teacher to enjoy her work, even looking forward to work despite its conditions.

Teaching pupils who cause stress results in the opposite of sustenance through affection – the effect of being starved of affection is de-motivation, and negative attitudes to teaching.

Age and marital status are two factors that, generally, shape the relationship of experienced teachers with pupils. The nature of the relationship changes as the age gap between the two widens. Some teachers come to enjoy the natural authority they get from being older than their pupils, and feel it helps them teach more effectively. Maha recognizes increasing levels of respect, but, equally, only sees the change as marginal.

My relation with my pupils is good though it has changed a bit since my first years. Perhaps because I grew older and now there is a considerable difference in age between them and me. They do respect me more than when I was a young teacher with no experience ... it is true that I don't like to form close relationships with my pupils but thank God I am sure they love me. It's not like "oh, no. It's Miss Maha again" when I get into the classroom. They do benefit from my teaching and learn ... this is what matters to me ... with time my pupils get used to my style and feel it is the right way.

Notions of "fear" linked with respect are absent, instead there is a recognition of a gentle, incremental effect of growing age disparity linked with deepening experience, and from this the development of "respect". Essentially this is respect built on the establishment and maintenance of the traditional distance between teacher and pupil: the establishment in the mind of the teacher of longer term goals – pupils' academic success – replaces concerns about shorter term comfort in the classroom. Control over the pedagogic situation involves this creation of strict parameters: the latter feeds into, directs and helps the former. "To be able to control the class ... once you have control over the class, you are in control of everything else." This may appear simplistic, but in terms of the particular needs and difficulties of Omani pedagogy – specifically the isolation of individual teachers – it may also be effective.

Others become critical of pupils, and compare them, unfavourably, to their own generation. "A teacher was something big to us [as pupils] unlike the situation now." (Reem) Maha also comments on the way pupils treat their teachers nowadays "Do you see how the relationship between pupils and teachers came to be? No respect."

There is a clear break between the unmarried teacher and her later identity as wife and mother.

I was enthusiastic ... dealing with my pupils ... I wasn't married nor had I children then. All I cared about was teaching, preparation and my pupils. I had a strong relationship with my pupils to the extent that they cried when I was transferred to another school at the end of that first year. (Safa)

As teachers age and take on the roles and responsibilities of wives and mothers, their emotional dependence on pupils weakens and they tend to adapt to a maternal role when dealing with them. This leads, in many cases, to a more formal relationship, where "... parental emotion can be seen to make a significant contribution to professional thinking and practice." (Sikes, 1998: 102) Some teachers reported they felt less popular because of this, and missed their pupils' affection. Khulood tries to explain the reasons behind the change in her relationship with pupils as linked to generational disparity – the typical, if clichéd, "generation gap". In Oman this may be exaggerated by the swiftness of change, and the intrusive nature of alien culture, as well as the conservatism of the older generation.

Perhaps because I grew much older than my pupils that I don't understand some of the things they do nowadays. Or again perhaps I look at them from a mother's point of view not a friend's. I care about them as I care about my children. That is why secondary school pupils don't come to me with their personal problems because they know I won't give them solutions that will make them happy. Growing older and being a wife and a mother has affected my behaviour because I matured. I am more realistic and practical now. It also affected my relationship with my pupils, as I grew distant from them. I do miss their attention but at the same time I am happy with myself although I don't have the same popularity as before.

Although Khulood effects a sense of contentment, there is also here a split: she is "realistic and practical" and "happy with [herself]" yet cannot achieve the level of communication she once did – her acknowledgment of the "distant" nature of her pedagogy is not unambiguously positive. The picture is different with single teachers, or those with no children, who tend to sustain a somewhat closer (non-maternal) interest in their pupils. This could be due to having fewer responsibilities at home and fewer non-collegiate emotional attachments: work and pupils are the main sources for emotional fulfilment. Pupils achieve a kind of surrogacy, yet without the set of restrictions

associated with the nurturing of one's own offspring. Moza, a single teacher, explains how valuable her pupils are for her. "My relationship with my pupils is very good. They love me. They come to me whenever they have problems. Even pupils that I don't teach come to me to explain what they don't understand in their lessons. My pupils are very important to me."

Moza's satisfaction is linked to the achievement of surrogate motherhood, an experience that must be limited to short-term experiences such as counselling or simply expressing affection. Experienced teachers take pleasure and satisfaction from having a positive long-term impact on pupils, and many report feeling proud of successful former pupils: for them, this is what makes teaching worthwhile. According to Metz (1993) when previous pupils grow into mature adults they become, in a teacher's opinion, "fully credible judges of education quality" (ibid: 120). This is the opposite end of the spectrum from Moza's surrogate motherhood, which is deeply subjective. Haya feels former pupils' comments on her teaching provide her work with a sense of value.

When I see my former pupils graduated from university I feel so happy. It also makes me feel that I have grown older, too. [She laughs] However, I feel that I have done something important and that I taught generations. They remind me that I have done something useful and that some people will remember me. There are some girls with whom I was very strict when they were my pupils and now when they see me they tell me "we know you loved us and that you were strict for our own sake". It is very flattering.

"Flattering" may not adequately represent the sense of deep achievement Haya is expressing. A sense of self-worth has been generated, which has a deep effect on pedagogy and personality alike. "I feel happy knowing that I did something worthwhile in my life and that all my efforts have had a positive result ... I feel satisfied to know that I had an impact on my pupils." (Aseel) Longer serving teachers often experience these emotions; there is a sense of contentment in completion.

I become very delighted when any of my pupils gets 100% in the final exams... Also, when I am in a place and see one of my former pupils come to me to say "hello. How are you, teacher?" I feel extremely happy and it makes me feel that I have done something valuable in my life. (Reem)

7.2.2. The Role of Colleagues in the Professional Lives of Teachers

The school environment plays an important role in the lives of teachers, determining for the most part those experiences which are formative and inspirational, supportive and directional. Since the heart of teaching is young people, colleagues are the only adults teachers socialize with in the school: colleagues are important in shaping or changing professional attitudes. The nature of and values attached to such collegiate relationships alter according to career stage, with a growing progression towards dependency on colleagues and away from dependency on pupils for emotional and professional support. The questionnaire data showed my sample chose “relationships with colleagues” as the third most common source of satisfaction in their careers (see 4.7.1). How do teachers, at different career stages, see relationships with colleagues, and how do such relationships satisfy?

7.2.2.1. Trainees and Other Teachers: Strangers in School

Feelings of difference, of not belonging to the same team as other teachers in the school where they do TP, shape trainees’ relationships in the school setting: the pre-service training programme, during which my sample trainees attended school once or twice a week, should, but currently does not encourage trainees to take part in collegiate activities and socialize with colleagues. Trainees in my research complain about being separated from other teachers, either physically, by being allocated a separate staff room, or by being ignored; colleagues’ attitudes were not always welcoming. In both cases respondents experienced disinterest or a deeper sense of rejection. Zakia, a trainee, says although sometimes she needs advice from other teachers, she does not ask for it. “[O]ther teachers in the school separate themselves from the trainees. They don’t involve us in their community.” Since trainees are allocated to schools in groups, they tend to stick with other trainees, cutting themselves off from other colleagues. Being still students themselves deepens feelings of difference and inequality: the school administration and other teachers refer to them as “university students” or “trainees”. This encourages their identification with pupils rather than with the teachers’ body in the school. After all, they have their university supervisors to provide help and advice –

the regular teachers are, apparently, professionally and socially less immediately relevant. What is clear is that the collegiate environment is rarely a friendly or a nurturing one for trainees, and this may well have an effect on their development, and even sow the seeds of later disenchantment by creating embryonic cynics, even before there is ample reason for cynicism. “What is the other teachers’ role? They are just colleagues. If it is for experience I will get it myself.” (Farah) Although Farah might sound hostile, she is defending her professionalism: her “I don’t need any one” attitude is a way some trainees react to feeling unwelcome; a strategy of denial saves their pride, preventing them from the bind of admitting the help they cannot get. Such rejection is a formative experience although later more positive experiences may help displace the memories of rejection.

7.2.2.2. Novices and their Colleagues: A Question of Acceptance

Colleagues, especially experienced ones, have a central role in the development of novices, and can be a formative source of satisfaction. They are important in two ways: as people with whom to socialise, and for advice and help. Young novices, especially those with fewer personal commitments, may turn to their schools for socializing; wanting to form friendships with colleagues to overcome the isolation they naturally feel in a new place surrounded by strangers. Colleagues also play a major role in shaping a novice’s attitudes and beliefs. Cooperative colleagues are a blessing to novices, helping them adjust and advising them on pedagogy. “My colleagues help me a lot. We work together. They didn’t make me feel new and without experience. They even ask me for my ideas and we exchange ideas.” (Meera) Those two aspects Meera mentions are key elements in novices’ relationships with colleagues. Novices particularly need to be accepted as professionals and as part of the school community (Carre, 1993). If they do not forge links with the other staff or feel unwelcome, they tend to distance themselves from the collegiate community. They need to feel that, even though they lack practical experience, they are no less a teacher. Reem describes positively her relationship with her colleagues during her first year as a teacher. “My relationship with my colleagues was good. We didn’t discuss things but when I needed to ask them about how to teach something they were willing to help me.” There is, however, still that element of help given only in a limited way, and the atmosphere of

the staffroom is remembered as a place where “things” were not “discuss[ed]”. Meera and Reem are two teachers who were lucky to be surrounded by relatively co-operative colleagues. Other novices are not so lucky and are deprived of an important source of development. More novices than any other group found it more useful to consult their colleagues: 38.9% said they “always” consulted their colleagues; none said they “never” did (see 4.4). Nevertheless, they were the group that faced most difficulty in working productively with other teachers. 22.2% of the novices questionnaire respondents said this was a major problem for them (see 4.4).

The absence of experienced teachers is a difficulty for newly appointed Omani teachers, due, in part, to the implementation of the early retirement policy (see 1.5), which aims at providing more job opportunities for younger, more qualified Omanis; yet this happens at a time of a rapid expansion in schools and the necessary implementation of new pedagogic practices. It has meant that the majority of teachers in some schools are new, depriving novices of supportive friends and colleagues, and a useful distribution of ages and teaching experiences. It may be more difficult to find nurturing professional advice when all colleagues are of a similar age range, and at a similar stage of development. Omani teachers, especially female Omani teachers, also lack other support systems, such as professional counsellors, trades unions or simply discussion groups. In such a situation, isolation can be more acute and more damaging. When the only colleagues to turn to for support are either equally new, or still unsure about their pedagogy, it is more likely that individual novices will be thrown on their own devices. Sometimes, this will work well, especially if motivation is high and vocation strong. At other times this creates a compartmentalized collegiality rather than one based around teamwork; problems or poor practices go unresolved, and teachers become embittered and unwilling, themselves, to help other novices later.

I was appointed in a school where the majority of teachers were also new because the more experienced teachers were given early retirement. There was only one EFL teacher with a three-year experience. She used to say she didn't have enough experience to help us. (Amani)

One wonders what kind (standard and type) of English is learnt in such an environment. Staff room talk was identified in the interviews as important in shaping novices'

attitudes and practices. The novice, in general, comes full of enthusiasm and usually works hard, spending a long time planning and preparing and always seeking new ideas. In my research, almost all the respondents complained of the way more experienced colleagues used to comment sarcastically on the length of time they took to prepare lessons, and their enthusiasm towards teaching. All respondents said they were frustrated at some point by the cynical remarks made by colleagues – for example, how quickly and certainly they would lose interest in teaching. Naturally such discouraging comments have negative effects on the novice who is looking for encouragement. In a compartmentalized environment they will have a particularly strong effect. One teacher found herself the butt of such cynical and nihilistic aggression. “This really discourages me and makes me wonder why they let this happen I really don’t have someone to encourage me. I guess that eventually I will become like them, but I am trying my best not to listen to them.” (Yasmin) Although Yasmin tries to deny being affected by her colleagues’ discouraging remarks, she knows she is. For her it is clear that she is going down the same road the others have travelled already, and she feels the only way to keep her vocation alive is by working among more encouraging colleagues. For teachers in remote regions, isolated physically as well as emotionally, the discouragement felt by Yasmin will be magnified.

Haya talks about the two-sided relationship she had with her colleagues when she was at the start of her career ten years ago.

The good things about my experienced colleagues was that they helped me when I needed something. However, the bad thing is that they used to frustrate me by saying that my enthusiasm would fade with time. I used to come to school ready to teach with lots of cards and visual aids and they would just say “Poor you. We will see how you teach in few years time”. It used to make me feel down.

Asked if, after all her years of experience, she now thinks they were right, her reply suggests a deep stultification within certain aspects of Omani teaching.

[Y]es they were right. We do the same work everyday because they are the same textbooks that we have been teaching since we were trainees. We know the lessons by heart now We have the same textbooks, the same type of pupils, nothing is changing

This attitude, which I refer to in my summary, is no superficial sense of frustration, but the reflection of a deep sense of unease. One explanation Sikes et al. (1985: 36) put forward for colleagues' scepticism is their desire to protect their own pedagogic practices – practices which Yasmin's colleagues may secretly recognize as deeply inadequate. "New, enthusiastic workers in any occupation pose a threat to the status quo. In order to avoid being shown up and made to work harder and re-examine methods, the older workers attempt to socialize the tyros into their ways and put pressure on them to conform." This could be the case in my research. The effects of colleagues' sceptical remarks and their cynical attitudes show by the end of the first year, as novices start to go with the flow, accepting the negative pressures of the staff room: in order to be accepted as part of the group, they must conform. After a while, they discover that meeting only the most basic requirements of their roles is, in fact, easier and more convenient. Lowering their input and thus lowering their expectations could prove to be an effective coping strategy, as they, gradually, become more satisfied with their careers. It is also possible that the nature of a bureaucratized nation like Oman is to engender not only professional cynicism, but also a widespread sense that the stultifying, homogenizing effects of the bureaucracy cannot be escaped.

7.2.2.3. Experienced Teachers: Colleagues – Indispensable Companions

As teachers become more involved in their community and the age gap widens between them and their pupils, relationships with colleagues take priority. By now they may have integrated well and feel secure, unless they have to start afresh in a new school, and thus repeat the painful process of assimilation. Colleagues are considered an essential element in the professional lives of experienced teachers, the social group within which they live and work. My respondents describe their relationships with colleagues in social terms - though they occasionally use colleagues' professional advice or help. Experienced colleagues continued to be guides for some less experienced teachers, most of whom described relationships with colleagues as "good", considering their colleagues important for lives inside and outside the school, and the level of socialization is predictably extensive: they visit each other on social occasions, and arrange activities. "My colleagues are a very important part of my life. They provide me with a social life and they are my friends too." (Reem) It is interesting that,

from excluding trainees and novices, the profession later becomes what seems like an exclusive club, “provid[ing] ... a social life” in a way which may seem strange to their European counterparts. Perhaps this explains, partially, why trainees and novices find it difficult to integrate.

Teaching experience seems to stop being a criterion of value in teachers’ relationship with their colleagues: experienced teachers do not regard colleagues as valuable sources of information, especially those who have had the same or less experience than themselves. Whereas novices mentioned experience a lot when talking about their colleagues, experienced teachers rarely did. Instead, most talked about how the experience of marriage brought them closer, marriage perhaps being perceived as a initiatory route into fuller acceptance – a core of the “normalizing” process already perceived, and particularly important in a socially conservative society. Amina, a married teacher expecting her first child at the time of her interview, describes the effect of this “normalization” on her relationship with colleagues who already have families. “My relationship with my colleagues is stronger now. Maybe because I got married so we had common things to talk about.” Common topics of conversation are only the explicit results of a much deeper socialization process.

Socializing dialogue displaces professional dialogue, which is virtually non-existent, particularly between those teachers who feel they have sufficient expertise. Although the majority of interviewees acknowledged this, few voiced the need for more professionally oriented relationships with colleagues. Is established confidence in their pedagogy the reason behind such attitudes? Is the school culture behind teachers’ reluctance to engage in professional discussions and shared activities? It is likely to be a combination of school culture, and a diminished conception of teaching adequacy, together with an awkwardness born of those social constraints already mentioned. Perhaps, also, the compartmentalization mentioned earlier leaves a significant trace in later development: professional dialogue must be based on some sense of true professional community. Despite all the socialization that occurs, does such a community really exist for Omani teachers, or are the acts of socialization merely distractions from the fact that a real pedagogic community, with a free and effective interchange of ideas, is weak or does not exist?

This is particularly evidenced as teachers, at this stage, begin to experience workplace tensions as they start to express concerns about promotional opportunities (see 5.2.3.7 and 5.2.4.2). “The atmosphere around you can greatly affect you. The jealousy and envy colleagues feel towards each other can get to you.” (Sara) Perhaps, for some experienced teachers, the desire to maintain a facade of pedagogic effectiveness is the reason behind keeping to themselves professionally: insecurity may lie behind expressions of envy.

7.3. Collegiality and School Leadership

The role of colleagues in professional development is accentuated by the scarcity of IST courses: colleagues may be the main or only sources of information especially for inexperienced teachers. As I indicated, teachers’ relationships with colleagues take various shapes, ranging from acting as advice agents for trainees and novices, to social agents at later career stages. It is apparent from the interviews that, at a professional level, the relationships between colleagues remain superficial, and fall mainly within the first two varieties of collegiality suggested by Little (1990, cited by Clement et al., 2000): story telling or scanning for ideas, and seeking aid or assistance (see 2.4.3.4). My respondents describe how their colleagues are professionally helpful in these two ways. They acknowledge that, although they do seek advice and new ideas from colleagues, there is no professional dialogue, they rarely discuss teaching, and there is no apparent effort to share materials or teaching ideas: team work does not seem to be on the Omani agenda for teachers. Some complained about the absence of “professionally oriented” colleagues with whom they could interact. Having been intrinsically motivated to join teaching, Sara talks about her continuous efforts to safeguard her motivation and commitment, and confesses it is a difficult battle, since “other teachers make me feel as if I come from another planet”.

This lack of professional interaction could be the natural outcome of the highly centralized Omani educational system. Although EFL teachers may seem privileged, with all teaching materials provided by the English Language Department of the Ministry of Education, such privilege creates dependence, and this in turn adds to the “isolated” complexion of teaching (Veenman, Denessen, Gerrits and Kenter, 2001),

where teachers can be described as “prisoners” in their own classrooms, having little need to cross classroom or departmental boundaries in search of help. This is just another facet of the dependency culture, which stunts initiative and innovative thinking - dependency and intellectual/professional isolation go hand in hand: having teaching materials already prepared and available, together with the manual teachers are constantly encouraged to follow (see 5.2.2.4), intensifies the professional isolation of those teachers. The manuals are constraining, and teachers may find it too convenient to follow their instructions, while the message conveyed by their omnipresence could be that teachers are not professionally trusted by the authorities – another effect of wider social constraints perhaps. “Cloned teachers” is the natural outcome of such reliance: failing to promote teachers’ creativity and independence is to blame for the way the majority of the interviewees describe teaching which, they say, is routine-driven, mind-numbing and boring. They complain about the lack of stimulation, which harmfully affects their motivation (see 5.2.3.5). In fact, a boring routine was the most common dissatisfier among the questionnaire sample chosen by 48.8% of the respondents (see 4.7.2). Amina concludes her interview with a cry for help.

I was surprised that the items in your questionnaire touched the heart of our reality as teachers. I really wish the authorities would consider your study They are killing our enthusiasm and [they] make teaching a routine work ... I have ideas that I cannot apply and energy that is diminishing year after year. I imagine myself in ten years time fed up of teaching. The more boring the task of teaching becomes, the less a teacher would contribute. If only there were renewing of the strategies and materials. The curriculum is a burden on us.

It may be that this attitude of dependency created among teachers in Oman has recently been acknowledged by the Ministry of Education though its deep implications for teachers’ professional development need to be analyzed. It may be difficult to change the culture of professional dependency while there is a wider and institutional culture of economic and political dependency. Teachers seem pleased that some inspectors, especially those who are new or young, have started to encourage them to be creative and not depend on the manual or textbooks. A new post, the “senior teacher”, has been created, whose task, besides teaching, is to ensure cooperation between teachers. A great deal of pressure is put on those who occupy this position, and while they are useful in breaking classroom isolation, in other ways they may not help either teachers or pupils. The senior teacher could be under too much pressure to perform a key role

while other teachers would have someone to rely on – merely shifting dependency into a different shape. These new conceptual forays are important, yet it will take more than the creation of a new post to foster qualities such as teacher independence from central authority balanced with proper interdependence (as well as a sense of professionalism and commitment (see 2.4.3.4)): fostering better collegiality means more than adding a teacher with a new role, but rather means creating a new culture – one built around teamwork.

The role of school management is crucial. School managers need to recognize the potential of a collegial environment, encouraging teachers to take advantage of the expertise of colleagues. This means the provision of “learning space” for learning to take place (Clement et al, 2000). Earlier research (Nias, 1981b and Macmillan, 1999) stresses the influential role of school management, in particular the role of head teachers, in promoting a school environment conducive to professional development. Schools should not be seen only as places for pupils to learn; teachers, too, need to develop and grow. “Effective schools have been defined as places where students learn. It is time to include in our definition a requirement about teachers’ learning as well.” (Feiman-Nemser, 1983: 152) Collegial interaction is a significant factor in such growth. Other studies (Bredson and Johansson, 2000 and Weiss, 2000) acknowledge that one of the primary tasks of school principals is to make a contribution to the professional development of their teaching staff. Bredson et al’s. (2000) discussion of the role of school principals in teacher development relies on three sources of data: a review of current research, policy reports, working papers and standards documents on school principals and teacher development; two focus-group interviews with principals and forty-eight structured interviews with teachers, principals and other school administrators. On the basis of the resulting data four areas are identified where principals could have an effect on teacher learning: the principal as instructional leader as well as learner; the creation of a learning environment; direct involvement in the design, delivery and content of professional development and the assessment of pedagogic development outcomes. Unfortunately, Omani principals seem not to be involved in any of these areas - their roles are largely, and comfortably, managerial. My interviewees show awareness of the effect their school management has on them,

and they talk about two main aspects of such influence: the lack of attention given to their professional development, and the lack of recognition for their efforts (see 7.4).

School management, in the experience of most interviewees, is mainly concerned with administration, and has no direct contact with teachers – certainly not when it comes to their professional development. Managers are more concerned that teachers are on schedule teaching the curriculum. Neither ensuring the quality of teaching nor the provision of teachers’ professional needs are considered management tasks, nor is much attention directed to teachers’ development. Teachers suffer from the consequences of such lack of concern, explaining that such an attitude has a negative influence on their attitudes to their jobs (see 5.2.2.3). Such an environment facilitates teacher stagnation rather than growth; “schools organized around hierarchical, bureaucratic control deprive teachers of meaningful input and consequently are often places where both teachers and students regard education less seriously, resulting in low involvement and effort.” (Yee, 1990: 5) This factor gains more significance in countries such as Oman where the educational system is hierarchical, controlled and centralized. In such a system, teachers are at the bottom of the educational ladder, their main role to apply what those above them decide; their input is rarely sought or considered. In such an environment, proximate school management has an important impact on teachers’ development. Adopting a teacher-centred approach to management (Evans, 1998) is one successful approach to staff management and development, but not one likely to be adopted in Oman in the short term.

7.4. School Management and Recognition

The second factor my interview data reveals, with regard to the role school leadership plays in teachers’ professional development and their career satisfaction, is the central role teachers attach to the recognition of their efforts – especially from school managers. Being one of the chief satisfiers in Herzberg’s “two-factor” theory (see 2.4.2), its absence entails a negative impact on teachers’ motivation and sense of satisfaction. My interviewees stress the value of recognition in sustaining their enthusiasm and motivation to perform well. In agreement with Evans’s (1998) findings, the teachers in my research disclose how the absence of appreciation makes them feel frustrated and

unmotivated. The situation in Oman is not unique in this respect, since research shows that teachers, in general, receive insufficient praise from head teachers: recognition plays a vital motivating role. Evans (1999) and Webb (1985) suggest that teachers are “especially frustrated by the lack of recognition by administrators for their hard work and accomplishments.” (Webb, 1985:83)

Since only 26.3% of the questionnaire respondents reported “lack of recognition for their efforts” as a dissatisfier, it could indicate that this issue is of little importance to Omani teachers. During the interviews, however, every subject strongly expressed their need to feel appreciated, especially by the school administration.

Recognition, especially from significant others, is essential to teachers’ self-esteem (Rawls, 1971 cited by Webb, 1985); appreciation of their efforts, even in spoken form, adds to teachers’ stamina. Teachers, I found, express their need for recognition in order to to carry on. Some interviewees want to be explicitly appreciated by their seniors to distinguish themselves from other teachers who are happy to do the minimum for their pay at the end of each month. When the school administration or local Education Department fails to identify those who work hard, it can discourage some from continuing to do their best. Amani and Bushra explain how a lack of appreciation of their efforts changed them.

No matter how hard I work I am just like other teachers who don’t work hard. We don’t expect a promotion or even a moral incentive. I am usually more enthusiastic at the beginning of each semester than the middle or the end of the semester. I do visual aids and administrative work for the school, but when I don’t find encouragement I stop doing these things. (Amani)

Bushra has come to be content to “work just like the others” because of a sense of disenchantment. “I need someone to appreciate my efforts. When one gets encouragement it makes one work harder. Now because I get no recognition or encouragement I work like the rest of teachers – finish my work at school and go home.” (Bushra) If students are to be encouraged through recognition and appreciation, this simple pedagogic formula is not lost on their teachers who expect to be treated similarly. If they are not, like Bushra, they become timeservers, doing the minimum required in order to survive.

Interviewees seem to talk about three things when they say they lack recognition: support for their work as teachers; encouragement, and appreciation of their work. This is apparent in the use of words such as “recognition”, “encouragement” and “support” interchangeably when talking about their relationship to the pedagogical hierarchies. “Lack of recognition has a negative effect on teachers because it results in disappointment. We need encouragement and time from others to support us in order for us to get motivated to do more and be better teachers than we currently are.” (Noaf) Teachers seek recognition as this boosts their confidence and motivation. Many teachers express their wish that the school administration could be more active in their professional development. Teachers believed that appreciation of their work and the provision of adequate encouragement should be the responsibility of the school administration.

The most important thing is that the school administration recognises one’s efforts, but based on my experience, recognition has no place in our schools. No matter how hard one works, no one will appreciate unless you are the type of teacher who tries to please the school principal. I guess this is the situation in most of our schools. (Safa)

Aseel talks with bitterness about lack of appreciation for her efforts

“The most painful thing in teaching...is that you work hard throughout the years and never hear the words ‘thank you; from your boss...we are human beings, we need encouragement. We need others to realise our good job and we need to hear that from them...”

She tells how towards the end of the year she was given a certificate, given to outstanding teachers, from the school she works in

“I was given a rose and a certificate. However, I felt nothing. You know, a whole year you struggle to do your best...without a word of thanks. A million of roses or certificates never give you that feeling after you lost hope to be appreciated. *It was too late.*”

The dislocation and disenchantment felt by teachers may be endemic, and if so the short-term effects on professional development itself, and the longer term effects on morale will be considerable. When recognition is not given by seniors, then another form of recognition, from pupils, is still welcomed. Teachers derive a great deal of

satisfaction from their pupils, and their feedback, in the form of appreciative remarks and successes, are valued by teachers – perhaps more so in the absence of recognition from seniors.

[W]hat is most de-motivating is the lack of encouragement from one's colleagues, the school administration or from anybody There is nobody to care or encourage. The pupils are the only source of satisfaction. We do new things in class and especially when they tell their friends in other classes I feel so happy. (Moza)

It appears from the interview data that, as Omani teachers gain more experience, they feel bitter about not being appreciated, and are driven back into their classroom isolation for appreciation. The intensity with which this kind of appreciation is mentioned deepens as the years pass. The questionnaire data found out that the more teachers stayed in their job, the more they considered leaving (see 4.8.2). After more than eight years in teaching, Maha seems to have given up hope that the school environment could be encouraging, a place that facilitates work.

What makes me dissatisfied with my job is the absence of any acknowledgement of my efforts by the school. There is no encouragement. Recognition and encouragement are crucial. Sometimes they do give appreciation certificates but to me these are only pieces of paper. Now, I don't even think of receiving encouragement anymore. I just do my job the best I can do. Though mind you with some encouragement one can work more and better, but I found this is just the way things are here; no encouragement, no promotion and no in-service training courses and there is nothing I could do about this.

Perhaps the nature of teaching as a “career-less” profession (Lortie, 1975 and 1984; and Yee, 1990) is responsible to some extent for the importance teachers attach to recognition. Since climbing the ladder is unlikely in Omani teaching, unless one gets into administrative work, teachers need other incentives. Teachers who work for many years come to the point where they feel that they have done their share with no tangible results. This experience, occasionally combined with seeing less experienced teachers achieve higher posts, can increase the occurrence of “burn out”, which can then intensify feelings of indifference, lowering effort because the benefits of hard work are perceived to be minimal.

Brouwers and Tomic's (2000) study of teacher burnout in the Netherlands suggests a connection between burnout and pupils' disruptive behaviour. However, I found no such connection. Rather, a link was evident between teachers' frustration with their careers, which can indicate a level of burnout, and workplace conditions such as an unsupportive school environment. Such an environment can lead to increasing levels of teacher detachment and lower levels of commitment. Pines's (2002) "psychodynamic existential" perspective to burnout seems plausible in the Omani context, assuming that "the root cause of burnout lies in peoples' need to believe that the things they do are important and significant". (ibid: 123) It seems that with lack of appreciation or any sense of growth, some teachers in my research stopped seeing the significance of their work: this may result in professional detachment, and burnout.

7.5. What Satisfies Omani Teachers? Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory in the Omani Context

The application of Herzberg's theory (see 2.4.2) to the Omani context, together with the alterations both Nias (1981b) and Evans (1998) made (see 2.4.2), reveals disturbing findings. The primary satisfiers for Herzberg are recognition, achievement, advancement, responsibility, and the work itself. The primary dissatisfiers are salary, company policy and management, and working conditions. Interpersonal relationships are considered primary satisfiers by Nias (1981a and 1989). I added the "negative satisfiers" category created by Nias (1981a) since I found it useful. It consists of inefficient administration, uncongenial colleagues, a lack of participation in the agreement of ends and means, and poor communication. In the Omani context Nias's negative satisfiers seem particularly relevant.

The "career-less" nature of teaching means that it is hard for teachers to feel they are advancing as there are few opportunities for progression. Lack of advancement coupled with a lack of recognition for achievements mean that teachers are dependent on the actual task of teaching to derive satisfaction. Since their work involves affecting pupils then they become dependent on their pupils as signs of their success. The significance of their colleagues lies in the opportunities they give for social interaction, some professional advice and assistance. Availability of "hygiene" factors does not result in a

feeling of fulfilment; it merely makes their job comfortable: there is nothing to complain about in terms of status, pay, or working conditions. However, not being considered important at the decision-making level, nor having much freedom in the classroom, frustrate teachers, turning teaching into an unchallenging task in which the teacher's main duty is to deliver the syllabus following the instructions provided, within the time framework determined by decision-makers. Such practices damage teachers' stamina and breed dependency.

It is reasonable to conclude that the majority of the teachers in my research do not experience satisfaction with their careers, but only a sense of comfort with the extrinsic rewards gained. Such rewards do not foster professionalism or commitment, and long-term effects of reliance on extrinsic motivators to attract and retain teachers could be damaging to the teaching profession in Oman as a whole.

Although the questionnaire data showed Omani teachers to be generally satisfied with their careers (see 4.6), the interview data provided a contradictory picture: teachers at different career stages seemed bored and frustrated, and many expressed their desire to move out of teaching. This apparent contradiction could be due to two factors: From the nature of the research instrument. Firstly, because of the nature of the semi-structured interviews, subjects had the opportunity to spell out what they were feeling without being limited by pre-determined categories and, secondly, the way the teachers conceive "satisfaction". Evans's (1998) distinction between "job comfort" and "job satisfaction" (see 2.4.2) is helpful in explaining this. Questionnaire respondents may not have distinguished feelings of comfort from feelings of satisfaction; during the interviews, as they talk freely about aspects of their careers, they touch on areas they had not considered earlier, and Evans's distinction becomes clearer.

Evans's (*ibid*) 'bifurcation' of job satisfaction is important in understanding my data. Because teaching in Oman enjoys a good status and has "satisfactory" working conditions, teachers feel "comfortable" in their job. However, whether what they do provides them with a feeling of satisfaction, and what the real nature of that feeling is in terms of its effects is another story. This could explain why over 46% of the questionnaire sample agreed that they would definitely choose teaching as their career if

given the chance again: this does not necessarily reflect teachers' satisfaction with careers, and I would argue that it is simply a reflection of pragmatism.

7.6. Summary of Chapter

The results of my research were, overall, similar to results of previous studies of teacher job satisfaction. Social relations within the school and the importance teachers attach to recognition were two of the main themes that Omani teachers explicitly identified as factors in job satisfaction. Although there are some differences with regard to sources of satisfaction between groups of teachers based on career stage, the career stage does not show any significant impact on teacher satisfaction.

Teachers, in this study, reported a general feeling of satisfaction, and many agreed they would choose teaching again, but analysis of the interview data indicated that such satisfaction was what Evans (1998) calls "job comfort". Fulfilment is not at all the same thing. Teaching was not a fulfilling career for respondents: if work conditions were satisfactory, they were so on a basic and functional level (enough materials, good pay) but not on an intrinsic and emotional level (contact with others, better integration in a collegial community, liberation from a sense of being trapped in a classroom, proper validation of efforts by seniors).

The journey from the enthusiasm expressed by novices and trainees to the frustration felt by more experienced teachers is clearly articulated by respondents: it is a journey that, I believe, is particularly determined by social context. Evans's conceptualising of job satisfaction is important in understanding the data: it may be of particular importance in understanding the psyche of those who have been brought up and work within a culture such as Oman's. Satisfaction is frequently measured in such circumstances by established and very powerful paradigms – specifically not susceptible to vocational concepts, but rather to the concept of work as a comfortable rather than challenging way to earn money. Pragmatism replaces enthusiasm, and, for the thoughtful teacher this can easily lead to frustration and burnout.

Haya's comments are of considerable importance to understanding the journey Omani teachers make from enthusiasm into frustration. When she says "We know the lessons by heart now ... [we] have the same textbooks, the same type of pupils, nothing is changing ..." she is expressing more than just mild frustration with materials or classes, but rather a deep sense of ideological dysfunction: a reflection of the stultified teaching environment as a whole. Where is the sufficient recognition any vocationally driven professional needs to develop and maintain enthusiasm? If Haya's bitterness is typical, and my data suggests it is, proper levels of recognition and appropriate rewards do not exist.

Chapter Eight: *The Way Forward*

8.1. Introduction

This research is based on the premise that teachers represent the key ingredient in educational quality, and is guided by the belief that any efforts to improve the quality of education are only be possible with greater understanding of the character and progress of teaching as a career, and therefore more specifically of teachers themselves. If the Omani educational system is to change and meet the economic, political and social challenges of the future, studies of the cultural context will facilitate such development. My respondents' commentaries on their professional and personal experiences illuminate this context. Recently, research has "broadened into a consideration of the social and institutional contexts within which teachers work," (Halliday, 1996: 63) and within this framework, the concept of teacher career stages holds great promise for guiding decisions on the empowerment, development, and the management of teachers.

The principal aim of this study is to explore empirically the applicability of the concept of career stages in teaching, extending the experience of teachers' individual stories as they move through these stages, linking these experiences to the wider institutional context. There has so far (2003) been little of such research, and more is needed – especially in the developmental context: it needs to be recognized that educational philosophies do not work equally well in widely different social, political and economic environments, and studies such as this are therefore particularly valuable. I have established that the career stages Omani teachers experience, and their satisfaction with teaching as a career, are similar to their Western counterparts, but that there are significant variables, such as the role of gender.

I believe this research does more than examine the applicability – or otherwise – of career stage models. It also does more than simply act as a repository for the experiences of a narrow group of government workers in a small, developing state.

There are no acts of disclosure which fail to have political meaning: this research highlights a hitherto ignored strata of workers by allowing their concerns to be heard, and putting those concerns in the context of research that offers a diagnosis of the Omani educational system.

This chapter is divided into three sections: 8.2 provides an overview of the research findings; 8.3 discusses the contribution of the study to the field, and implications of the research for teacher professional development, and 8.4 offers some concluding remarks.

8.2. Overview of Research Findings

The research addressed three interrelated sets of questions. The first, discussed in chapter five, is concerned with teacher career stages.

Is there a general sequence of stages through which Omani teachers move in their careers? If so,

- a) What are these stages?
- b) Are they similar to the stages of teacher careers identified by the relevant literature?
- c) What are the characteristic concerns of trainees and teachers at each of the different stages?
- d) What part does professional experience play in teachers' progression through the different stages?

The data demonstrates that the majority of Omani teachers move through distinct general career phases, though the results do not permit a generalization that *all* Omani teachers move through these stages during their careers. Individual differences can impact on the sequence, speed and intensity of teachers' experiences of these stages. Also, since this research examined the careers of teachers with up to ten years' experience, it was only possible to discern early to mid-career phases. Other research is needed to examine later career stages.

The sample was found to move through four phases: the academic, the novitiate, the

maturity and the mid-career phases, phases similar to those identified in the literature. This prompts a consideration of the intersection of “universal” pedagogic characteristics, and of those additional characteristics attributed to context. Whereas the “career clock” may be an almost universal career constant, social and ideological pressures which put women at a disadvantage, and which discourage men from teaching, are variable. Oman, despite the political rhetoric about female equality in the workplace, remains deeply wedded to concepts of the “suitability” of certain jobs in terms of gender. This in turn suggests an attitude to a workforce which probably does not encourage teachers through difficult career phases, and is unlikely to do so in the near future.

Teachers at these different phases display certain distinguishing phase characteristics: a trainee’s preoccupation with survival is different from a novice’s concern with being accepted as a real teacher in the school community. While a teacher at the maturity phase has increased levels of self-confidence that enable her to experiment with teaching strategies, a teacher in the mid-career phase is looking for new challenges. Institutional factors within the school and the educational system, personal factors such as marriage, and external, wider social factors such as perceptions of gender are found to impact particularly on Omani teachers’ career progression. This finding served to support recent calls for further research on the influence of context on teachers. (Ball and Goodson, 1985; and Hargreaves and Goodson, 1996)

The second set of research questions look at the sample’s initial motivations to join the teaching profession, and the impact their personal lives have on their careers. The entire sample consists of Omani women teachers, and it is, therefore, interesting to examine the influence of two specific variables: gender and social context.

What interplay exists between teachers’ personal and professional lives?

- a) What attracts Omani women to teaching as a career?
- b) What is the role of gender in the professional lives of teachers?

Chapter 6 deals with questions which have never previously been researched. This is an important and generative part of the research, because it turns attention to aspects of

Omani society which have, hitherto, remained ignored, or even hidden. The main attraction of teaching to my research sample is its “suitability” or “convenience”. The majority chose teaching because it is “a suitable career for women”; analysis of the interview scripts provides illumination of this broad term. In the context of both this research and Omani education, “suitable” could be considered to have pejorative and certainly patronising connotations, even though used by women. Gender is found to be the crucial underlying influence on an individual’s career choice; commitment to career and, ultimately, professional development is profoundly affected by the feminine identity within a social context that does not easily hear the female voice. The problem of identity in this environment is expressed sometimes in the interviews as a sense of depression, insecurity, cynicism, detachment and a sense of being unfulfilled and ignored. The role of Omani society, as this research indicates, is powerful, since dominant social ideologies are responsible for the formulation and determination of gender roles. Social pressures within Oman remain intense, and ensure high levels of conformity. Failure to conform may result in feelings of inferiority, or in specific individuals being rejected by groups which are defined by their obedience to wider social norms. What has proved exceptionally provocative is the level of need of these teachers to express themselves.

A relationship is evident between subjects’ initial motives and their subsequent commitment to teaching. Intrinsically motivated teachers tend to sustain their interest and commitment to teaching while extrinsically or culturally motivated teachers, who teach because it is an accepted professional role, tend quickly to lose interest. The extent to which Omani female teachers are culturally rather than personally motivated (such a distinction is possible) is shown to be considerable: the fragility of such motivation may, the data suggests, present itself differently in different individuals, but in all cases effects on careers are negative. What have been exposed are the points of fracture between individual and social motivations, and also the weakness of a politically stated social equality which is not matched by the reality in the workplace or the home.

Teachers’ personal lives, especially marital status and motherhood, are found to influence deeply their professional development. Single teachers display more interest

and involvement in their jobs than those married with children. Motherhood is a particularly potent factor: parent teachers, predictably perhaps, tend to prioritize their children. Although much has been written about the effect of motherhood on a woman's career (for example, Lortie, 1975), the powerful influence of society, especially of an Islamic, developing society, which may itself be in a state of insecurity and flux, has not fully been explored. Respondent parent teachers, in the context of my study, are expected and encouraged to give priority to their families. This expectation, linked with cultural/extrinsic motives to join teaching – especially its “suitability for women” – is a considerable influence on Omani female teachers' professional development. I found that many respondents seemed trapped in their concept of suitability, as if the word were accepted, the ideology behind it understood, but the practice proceeding from both were in the process of some kind of intellectual rejection. These factors were also found to have implications for Omani teachers' sense of satisfaction with their careers. In essence contextual ideological factors help relegate feminine careers to a secondary position, and this may create a stratum of discomfort within every woman's career identity, a stratum which affects the way career stages develop, and the way the career clock ticks.

The third set of research questions examines the issue of teacher job satisfaction. This was initially an issue within teacher career stages; however, the weight it was given by the data prompted me to explore it in greater depth in chapter 7.

How does the job satisfaction of teachers evolve?

- a) To what extent are Omani women teachers satisfied with their job?
- b) What are the determinants and sources of their job satisfaction?

Most teachers who responded to the questionnaire report that they are generally satisfied with their careers. However, during the interviews, it became apparent that questionnaire respondents are, in fact, referring to satisfaction as “job comfort” rather than job fulfilment (Evans, 1998). The satisfactory extrinsic rewards of teaching, in this context, provide teachers with a sense of comfort that, for some, is satisfactory. Initial motives play a key role in satisfaction. Extrinsically motivated teachers tended to be more ‘satisfied’ and, hence, reliance on “hygiene” factors is not likely to be the best

way to recruit and retain committed teachers. Both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated teachers found fulfilment through intrinsic rewards and, in line with previous research, social relationships within the school community, including recognition of their efforts, are found to be central to a teacher's satisfaction. School management is also found to be responsible for both satisfaction and professional development: the provision of a stimulating, teacher-centred working and learning environment that acknowledges the central role of solid collegiality is indispensable to teacher satisfaction.

8.3. Contributions and Implications

The goal of our work ... is not to produce a mass of generalizations atop which a theoretical tower can someday be built The special task of a social scientist in each generation is to pin down the contemporary.

(Cronbach, 1975 cited by Cooke and Pang, 1991:126)

This study has built on existing research, contributing to an evolving teaching career stage model. Teachers and their managers may use these findings to establish better practices and environments, helping realize professional potential. However, it is not the aim of my research to provide what Halliday (1996) calls "generalized prescriptions for action", but rather a better understanding of teachers in this particular context. Such an understanding has implications for the theoretical constructs and models relating to teacher education and development, and particular implications for those fields in the Omani context. This thesis also has implications for further research, suggesting research rationale, direction, and procedures.

The information that research on career stages provides is of critical importance to teacher educators. The knowledge that results from recognizing teachers' characteristic concerns and needs at different periods of their careers benefits the development and/or evaluation of pre-service and in-service teacher development programmes. This research has certain implications for initial teacher preparation (8.3.1), continuing professional development (8.3.2.), and implications for future research (8.3.3).

8.3.1. Initial Teacher Preparation

Research confirms that teachers with strong preparation programmes behind them are much better prepared to teach (Sykes, 1999 and Dalring-Hammond, 1999). However, professional certification is a point of departure, not an aim of itself (Wallace, 1991 and Kelchtermans, 1993). When initial training is viewed as a point of departure, the whole philosophy of initial teacher education is affected. The ultimate aim of such programmes should be to enable trainees to be responsible for their own professional development (Larsen-Freeman, 1983). The ability to take responsibility for development is vital, fostering independence and autonomy, and necessitates a new understanding of the teacher's role. Encouraging trainees to be critical of their actions is of great benefit. Besides assuming responsibility for their pedagogy, improving teaching strategies, and achieving independence, the impact on pupils could be significant: autonomous learners may particularly benefit from autonomous teachers, and investing in teacher preparation pays off in the quality of teaching pupils receive. The use of critical reflective activities is one of the effective strategies of achieving such as objective. One way to encourage the use of greater reflection is through "shared knowledge" which can be used for "reflective dialogue" (Wallace, 1991). This could be achieved, according to Wallace (*ibid*), through discussion of trainees' practices and experiences in micro-teaching, lesson transcripts and observations which help them uncover and examine their perceptions of teaching and learning. Another benefit of such group activities is that it helps break the isolation of trainees, and sets the tone for better team work in the longer term.

This research calls for a change in the roles of Omani teachers. Teachers are not mere instructors, nor are they passive recipients or implementers of policies. They have greatest potential once latent energy and ability are released. If the Omani educational authorities can recognize teachers' potential, and thus empower them, the benefits could be substantial - though this may demand, perhaps unrealistically, a total systematic review of the current teaching philosophy. Studying teachers' work and lives is an important synthesis: until now a teacher has been viewed as two separate entities, one working and the other constrained by quite different priorities. This research links the two, and this synthesis, "represent[s] an attempt to generate a counter-culture which will

resist the tendency to return teachers to the shadow; a counter culture based upon a research mode that above all places teachers at the centre of the action and seeks to sponsor 'the teacher's voice'". (Goodson, 1991: 36 cited in Goodson, 1994: 31) It is easy to disempower, perhaps by sidelining the development of the individual and concentrating on their fulfillment of professional tasks: a kind of mechanization of the teaching role that removes the identities and human needs of teachers. Such disempowerment is even more in evidence in a society where female roles are standardized as secondary, and primarily domestic. The research cannot but give faces back to these individuals, and "demechanize" their roles in a highly gendered profession such as teaching – one clear result has been to show how gendered teaching remains, and what is the specific type of gendering within the Omani context. The findings help to throw some light on the link between a teacher's life and their work (Goodson, 1994) and a link between these and those institutional structures which may benefit from the absence of such a link. The reality of teachers' stories can affect institutional structures in this way. I have not sought any kind of position of authority – but rather an 'authority with' not an 'authority over' my subjects. (Gore, 1993 cited in Edge and Richards, 1998:341)

The selection of potential student teachers is an essential first step to preparatory programmes, since initial motives to join teaching were found in this study to have potential impact on subsequent professional development. It is, therefore, vital that candidates are inspired by intrinsic motives, and although extrinsic considerations in career choice are natural and inevitable, they need not be the prime or only motives. In Oman, the best achieving female students go into teaching, so it is not a choice based on lack of ability. Rather, it is a pragmatic decision based on cultural norms, gender roles and economic considerations. Such considerations can potentially have positive effects once gender and identity are themselves seen as positive.

The research findings bear on another aspect of teacher preparation: its relevance to the real world of teaching. Initial training has been criticised for not being sufficiently related to a real environment (Coste, 1983), and this research confirmed such criticism in the Omani context. It is clear that the gap between views based on theoretical work and those emerging from real practical teaching experiences is difficult to bridge, unless

the overarching philosophy of the training programme be reconsidered. In interviews, subjects at different stages of their careers mention the negative effects during their early years in teaching of the gap between training and classroom reality; such effects could have been avoided if the initial training programme had prepared them for the realities of the classroom.

Practical teaching is indicated to constitute a valued element of initial teacher preparation. Respondents regard it as an indispensable aspect of training, and they believe the amount they have or had is insufficient. Early, frequent and supervised contact with the classroom and schools is advisable (Brown, 1983; Gower, 1988 and Frazier, 1999), and trainees' experience in schools should be organized to allow them to experience teaching realities, be able to practice different roles and reflect on their experiences and receive constructive feedback on their practices. Previously acquired ideas about teaching need to be addressed to prevent them becoming trainees' main sources of pedagogic reference: teachers are expected to teach in ways different to those they themselves experienced (Darling-Hammond, 1999). Preparing teachers better for their future roles, and breaking them away from those practices they themselves experienced as pupils, is particularly difficult in a culture which may view departures from established training as unnecessarily radical. It is also difficult in a culture which relies on expatriate teachers both in schools and in training, and where there is no history of adapting practice in this way. Experimentation and adaptation of training practice with a strong emphasis on practical training may seem a burden, yet are very valuable in the preparation of teachers for a rapidly changing society.

Research into teacher education generally advocates a partnership between higher education institutions, responsible for initial teacher training, and the schools in which teachers complete their teaching (Elliot, 1991). The confusion resulting from lack of cooperation in Oman between schools and TCCs has a far-reaching impact on teachers' evolving pedagogic philosophies, and means trainees do not take full advantage of practical experience, and are constrained, in many cases, to the roles of instructors (see 3.5.5.1)– there is no provision of varied opportunities to experience the whole gamut of teaching. This is one of the results of the lack of an explicit policy delineating the responsibilities of each institution with regard to trainees. Responsibilities and

expectations are confused between TTCs and schools, with student teachers left to survive, and endure the trauma of major role shifts, while making sense of their experiences - complicated and overwhelming initially. Trainees' very basic need for support and encouragement during their initiation is particularly apparent in this research; this unmet need accentuates a feeling of isolation, which in turn limits the benefits of the training programme, forcing a reversion to "pupil-based" images of teaching. Such reversion, however stultifying for teachers and pupils alike, should be understood as a natural reaction to a lack of adequate institutional support.

This research gives Omani teacher educators an insight into the drawbacks of teacher education programmes. The findings suggest the following weaknesses in the pre-service teacher preparation programme at SQU, highlighted by Alkateeb and Ashoor (1997) in their critique of teacher education programmes in the wider Arab world. These can be summarized in four specific points.

1. Lack of a theoretical framework for teacher education;
2. Lack of clear or well-defined objectives for teacher education programmes;
3. Lack of a balance between theory and practice with more emphasis placed on theory; and
4. Lack of continuity in the professional development of teachers: no co-operation between institutions responsible for pre-service and in-service teacher development, the relationship between the two lacking either trust or recognition.

Finally, results show that trainees are a valuable source of feedback on the quality of preparation they get. Since the study is cross-sectional, it is possible to compare the sample's evaluation of their training programme at SQU, although this is not one of the objectives of the study. Despite opinions that trainees' evaluation of their training, though possibly subjective and influenced by immediate needs, changes with teaching experience, the research notes that all respondents share similar and consistent views about their initial training.

8.3.2. Continuing Professional Development

The research findings have certain implications for the “on-the-job” professional development of teachers.

- Initiation into teaching is a period in teachers’ professional lives which is of fundamental importance. During this phase, novices need support from people in the school setting. The research shows that lack of support systems could prove expensive for the educational system, impacting negatively on novices’ enthusiasm and attitudes, and finally on pupils’ achievement. The provision of induction programmes is, therefore, essential. Mentoring has been recommended as one way of providing novices (as well as trainees) with support (Feiman-Nemser, Parker and Zeichner, 1994; Booth, 1995; Fish, 1995; Shaw, 1995; Husbands, 1997 and Brooks and Sikes, 1997), but it is important to take care not to turn training into a craft mode, in which apprentices copy masters. Mentoring should enable candidates “to grasp the complexity of classroom life”. (Jacques, 1995:112) This may mean a paradigm shift for Omani teacher educators, who must currently reflect an ideology that, so far, has not recognized the usefulness of bottom-up innovation. It may be that such recognition is not possible in the current socio-political climate. It is interesting that in educational systems like Oman’s, simple copying of a clear teaching practice (an old teacher’s perhaps, or a mentor’s) is a common way to learn classroom skills, but not one that is adaptive, allowing the new teacher to grow into their abilities. Copying is also a deeply conservative practice, which locks out change. It may be that a rapidly changing society, such as Oman’s, can overcome such practices and learn new ones; it is also possible that, in an atmosphere of large economic and social shifts, adventurousness in the classroom will suffer.
- The provision of a stimulating school environment is basic to teacher development at all career stages. Both challenge and support are necessary components of professional growth (Elliott and Calderhead, 1995), and the school management, which needs to adopt a teacher-centred approach, plays a central role in development. The stifling Omani ministerial attitude to schools is recreated by the management of those schools, and passed on to teachers, who then, perhaps through

a cynicism or general disengagement, pass it on to novices and trainees. Political and social attitudes cascade through the educational system, creating particularly negative environments for teacher development.

- Colleagues are a crucial element in a teacher's professional development: a strong collegial environment should contribute to development, learning and job satisfaction. A question strongly suggested in this research is whether experienced teachers are reliable repositories of expertise: if they are, are they also willing to cooperate with junior colleagues and provide guidance, and are they given sufficient opportunity to do so? Again, the role of school management is valuable in promoting an appropriate environment. The provision of continuous professional development courses is beneficial both in refreshing teachers' sense of career identity and updating their teaching methods. But without a deeper sense of collegiality, whatever the level of IST offered, individual teachers will remain marooned in their classes, and vulnerable. IST, like the practical training already mentioned, is unlikely to be of any benefit unless a system embraces innovation.
- Teachers at different career phases have different concerns, needs and requirements. IST is one way to cater for such a wide range of needs, and taking these needs into account when designing such courses may be crucial. Such courses will not be effective unless individuals believe they are relevant, satisfy their professional needs and address their current concerns. Omani teachers repeatedly complain about the absence of professional development programmes which, they believe, are essential – but it should be recognized that the teaching environment works in tandem with continuous training. A problem may be created if the educational authorities offer IST as a “simple” solution, without understanding how it fits with teacher development. Should IST be used without adequate thought about the motivation of teachers, just as another demand passed down from the bureaucracy, it is unlikely to have positive results. “... [T]he key to successful learning is motivation, which cannot be achieved by means of tight centralised control. Personal commitment and involvement are likely to be limited when teachers must follow dictums devised by others.” (Rubin, 1989 cited by Day, 2000: 107)

- There needs to be a career ladder that recognizes the professionalism and expertise of teachers: this might overcome the problem of teaching being an “unstaged” career (Lortie, 1975), and help teachers feel they are advancing professionally. The danger here is that a career ladder becomes a model of the hierarchical structure too apparent elsewhere and prone therefore to the same stultification.

8.3.3 Future Research

Perhaps the most obvious contribution of this research is that it illustrates the importance of examining contextually dependent factors at all stages of career development. The effects of cultural and institutional factors on teachers’ careers and professional development are immense, and there is an absence of research on teacher career stages in different contexts.

This research also indicates the importance of the issues of gender and job satisfaction in teachers’ professional development. Although the role of gender in the teaching profession has frequently been discussed in Western literature, few studies have addressed this issue in different social and developmental contexts. This research shows how powerful cultural and social influences are on women’s choices of and progression in their careers. More research is needed: it would be interesting to examine the world of male teachers and the effect of gender on their careers, remembering that teaching may not be considered “suitable” for men. There is also a need for more research on job satisfaction in the teaching profession, and the development of a more holistic theory of teacher job satisfaction: clearly the nature of teaching as a vocational service profession makes direct application of theories of job satisfaction problematic.

Due to the time limitations of a PhD, the study used a cross-sectional sample of teachers. Longitudinal studies could provide richer information with regard to the process by which teachers move from one career phase to another. The methodology of future research should perhaps consider the use of participant observations, in which the researcher takes a role in the context of the study. Such a method could provide enlightening insights about the factors that affect professional development. Repeated interviews with teachers, use of diaries, the life history technique or examining

individual case studies are just a few of the methodologies future research could consider.

8.4. Concluding Remarks

“Over the years we have learned a great deal about teachers; however, as is evident from the recent re-emphasis on the study of teachers, we still have much to learn.”

(Anderson and Burns, 1989: 243)

What has motivated me throughout is the knowledge of the importance of studying something so far unresearched – female Omani teachers, a unique group whose story needs to be told and which can throw a revealing light on Omani culture as a whole: the way this group see and experience their careers and the ways they are perceived and used are reflections of wider socio-cultural perceptions, and concepts of gender. This study makes accessible the hitherto untouched world of female Omani teachers, interesting of itself, but also important in terms of future educational planning in Oman - any successful attempt to modify or develop the educational system needs to take account of those issues revealed here. The contexts within which teachers live affect their professional experiences, and this is evident from my research, where commitment and satisfaction were shown to be largely coloured by social perceptions of gender and the role of the teacher.

The present study may encourage future research on teachers in Oman, by allowing teachers themselves to have the confidence to voice their attitudes and concerns. It should not be forgotten by Western readers that research such as this may have an effect in a developing country by offering a chance for expression, and creating awareness through that expression. Even in the West not enough is done to allow this expression to feed back into teacher training and development - “[i]n the world of teacher development the central ingredient so far missing is the teacher’s voice.” (Goodson, 1991 cited by Cortazzi, 1993:10) This omission and the current paucity of research is one thing this study sought to address, hoping also to offer an understanding of the environment and psychology of Omani education as a whole. The implications of these research findings for teacher education and development in Oman may be substantial.

Despite the current renovations and investments in the education infrastructure in the Sultanate (see 1.4), little attention has been given to the central agents of such important changes, and no amount of transformation is possible without considering the heart of education – the teacher.

Thus this research attempts to “make space for the actual voices of those who have previously been merely represented” (Edge and Richards, 1998:341), one clear problem with the educational system in Oman, and which is shown in microcosm in the area of EFL, being that the top-down system fails to recognize the complexities of teachers, who comprise the real functioning heart of the system. Perhaps part of this lack of recognition is fear of what real recognition entails politically. Ignorance of the needs of those who are key to the implementation of, and must be involved in any changes to the system may mean that such changes are unlikely to succeed, or will work in inefficient or partial ways. This research opens up for examination the culture of teachers, and may make it more difficult, in future, for the bureaucracy to ignore their needs. The feminized and peculiar culture of the teaching population need no longer be relegated to abstraction or unimportance.

Teachers’ thoughts, perceptions, beliefs and experience are all aspects of teachers’ culture which we need to know about and be aware of as a key factor in education, especially in times of change. Yet this crucial aspect of education is probably undervalued and certainly under-researched. Educational investigations, in general, have paid too little attention to teachers’ voices. Teachers’ culture is largely unexamined. (Cortazzi, 1993:1)

The concern with the teachers’ voice expressed in my research material is essentially a concern with teacher empowerment, and recognizes that teachers are the best tools with which to develop a society.

As research on teachers evolves, it goes through major shifts that reflect social, economic and political changes (Ball and Goodson, 1985). The earlier emphasis on the relationship between teacher characteristics and practices and learner achievement was transformed into a genuine interest in teachers as people and practitioners. The idea of career stages in teaching reflects this. My research may be a constructive or at least

illustrative addition to the growing database on teacher career stages. It is hoped that it provides a novel contribution to research in this area.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Exploratory Study: Pupils' Questionnaire

Name (optional):

Level:

Age:

Dear student,

Please respond to the following questions by stating your own opinion clearly. This short questionnaire is part of a research on teacher training. Be assured that the information you provide will be confidential and will be used for research purposes only.

From your point of view and your experience as a student learning English for a number of years:

1. Is English one of your favorite subjects? Why?
2. What are the personal qualities (e.g. the teacher is friendly) that you feel make a 'good' English language teacher?
3. What teaching skills (e.g. the teacher uses group work when needed) you feel are important for a teacher to be a 'good' English language teacher?
4. What are some of the activities that teachers use in the English language class that you find beneficial and enjoyable?
5. What activities you don't find beneficial or interesting?
6. Can you describe the English language teacher you would like to have and who, you think, will be able to help you learn English in a better way?

Feel free to add any comments that you feel relevant. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Appendix 2: Exploratory Study: Teachers' Questionnaire

Name (optional):

Years of experience:

Gender:

Dear teacher

Please respond to the following questions by stating your own opinion as clearly as possible. This questionnaire is part of a preliminary data collection for research about teacher training in the Sultanate. Be assured that the data will be dealt with confidentially and used for research purposes only. Please read all the questions before attempting to answer.

1. What are, in your opinion, the different roles played by teachers?
2. What are, in your opinion, the personal characteristics (e.g. to be highly motivated) of a 'good' English as a foreign language teacher?
3. Which of these personal characteristics do you feel you possess?
4. Which of them do you feel you do not currently possess, but would like to develop?
5. What are, in your opinion, the important teaching skills (e.g. the ability to manage the classroom effectively) a 'good' EFL teacher should have?
6. Which of these teaching skills do you feel you currently possess?
7. Which of them do you feel you lack at the moment, but would like to develop?
8. What are the main problems you face as a teacher?
9. How do you overcome these problems?

10. From your point of view and your own experience, what are the important components of an initial teacher training program that help trainees become 'good' English as a foreign language teachers? (e.g. how to deal with special needs students).
11. Given your previous experience in Sultan Qaboos University as a trainee teacher, what were the major strengths and the major weaknesses of the pre-service teacher training program there?

Strengths

Weaknesses

12. Do you think your training has adequately prepared you to cope with the demands of being a teacher? Why?
13. What are the factors that helped you to develop as a teacher besides your pre-service training?

Feel free to write on the other side if the space provided isn't enough and add any comments that you feel appropriate.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Appendix 3: Exploratory Study: Trainees' Questionnaire

Name (optional):

Gender:

Dear trainee,

Please respond to the following questions by stating your own opinion as clearly as possible. This questionnaire is part of a preliminary data collection for research about teacher training in the Sultanate. Be assured that the data will be dealt with confidentially and used for research purposes only. Please read all the questions before attempting to answer.

1. What are, in your opinion, the different roles a teacher plays?
2. What are, in your opinion, the personal characteristics of a 'good' English as a foreign language teacher (e.g. to be highly motivated)?
3. Which of these personal characteristics you feel you possess?
4. Which of them you feel you do not possess, but would like to have?
5. What are, in your opinion, the important teaching skills a 'good' EFL teacher should have (e.g. the ability to manage the classroom effectively)?
6. Which of these teaching skills you feel you currently possess?
7. Which of them you feel you lack at the moment, but would like to develop?
8. What are the main problems you face as a teacher in the teaching practice?
9. How do you overcome these problems?
10. From your point of view and your own experience, what are the important components of an initial teacher training program that help trainees become 'good' English as a foreign language teachers?

11. Given your previous experience in Sultan Qaboos University as a trainee teacher, what were the major strengths and the major weaknesses of the pre-service teacher training program there?

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

12. Do you think your training will adequately/effectively prepare you to cope with the demands of being a teacher? Why?
13. What are the factors that helped you to develop as a teacher besides your pre-service training?

Feel free to write on the other side if the space provided is not enough and add any comments that you feel appropriate.

Thank you very much for your cooperation

Appendix 4: Guidelines for Diary writing

Dear teacher/ Dear trainee,

Diary writing has been used in education for different purposes, but mainly as an important introspective research tool and as a valuable activity in initial teacher training and teacher development. In many places, teachers and trainees are encouraged to keep diaries as, among many other benefits, a way of recording and thinking critically about everyday teaching events. This process of critical thinking or reflection is believed to enhance the professional development of teachers and trainees. Diaries are also one of the ways in which teachers' and trainees' professional needs and concerns are recognized as a first step in order to cater for them in pre as well as in-service teacher training. Therefore, as a way of keeping up with recent developments in education and because of the great benefits gained from using diaries, this study seeks to utilize this very beneficial tool in the Omani context and your participation will be a valued one leading to a better understanding of the way teachers in our country develop. Your participation will also help in the enhancement of teacher education and development in the Sultanate of Oman.

I would like to thank you for your valuable contribution to my research project. I really appreciate the time and effort you'll spend in writing your diaries. Be assured that the information you provide will be confidential and used for research purposes only. Below are general guidelines regarding the use of diaries. They might answer some of the questions you might have.

- How do I go about writing in my diary?

First of all, you are asked to write six entries (whether it is one paragraph or more) per term. One of the entries should be written at the beginning of the term and one should be written at the end. The remaining four can be written any time in between. However, you should be careful not to write all four in one week for example! The total number of

entries required from you would be 12 for the two terms of school. The minimum length of a single entry is 150 words i.e. fifteen lines. You have the choice of writing in Arabic, English or a mixture of the two. It is entirely up to you and has no relevance to this study.

- What do I write about?

Diaries are supposed to be written accounts of what one feels important. However, in general, you are required to write about your teaching experience in the school. Things to write about could be (but should never be looked at as the ‘only’ topics):

1. the problems you face in school;
2. how you overcome the problems you face;
3. what you learn from being a teacher in school;
4. the main factors that help you develop as a teacher;
5. your relationship with the different people in the school;
6. the effect of your pre-service training on your view of teaching and on your teaching style;
7. any changes you feel happened to you after starting your job as a teacher;
8. any success stories;
9. whether your feeling towards teaching have changed in any way; and
10. any daily events you want to share (no matter how small or big the event is).

Thank you very much once more for your cooperation.

Note:

If you have any queries or if you want to contact me you can either:

1. E-mail me on (ahoudali@hotmail.com)
2. Call me on (00442476-421462 in England) or (683368 in Oman (from January, 2001). I would be more than happy to hear from you!

Appendix 5: An Interview Guide

Name of teacher:

Date:

Time:

No.	Question	Comments
1.	Background Information	To start the interview
2.	Can you tell me about how you became a teacher? (Entry into Teaching) When did you start thinking about what you wanted to be? Was teaching your choice? Were you influenced by anyone: former teachers, family members, and the community as a whole?	Look at the interviewee's questionnaire answers and ask for more information, clarification...etc
3.	Information about the teaching practice during in-service training: Feelings, memories, events, people (supervisors, colleagues, administration & pupils) Problems faced during this stage and ways used to resolve them, professional needs, and how you think it could have been made a better experience. What were the good things that you remember about you experience during teaching practice?	Look at the interviewee's questionnaire answers
4.	Same type of information, as above, about the respondent's first year in teaching	Look at the interviewee's questionnaire answers
5.	Information about her situation as a teacher now: (Current Situation) Any change of feelings compared to when you started? How you think you have changed as a teacher over the years or since you became a teacher? What are the things that make you feel satisfied / dissatisfies in you job? What are the problems you face at this stage of your career,	Look at the interviewee's questionnaire answers

No.	Question	Comments
	<p>how do you overcome them ?</p> <p>Your relationship with others in the school (inspectors, administration, colleagues and pupils)</p> <p>What do you think of the teaching career?</p> <p>If given the chance again, would you choose teaching as your career? Why/ why not?</p> <p>If you have the freedom to choose any career what would be your choice? Why?</p> <p>When you teach do you feel you are using some of the methods that your former schoolteachers used to use when teaching you?</p> <p>What do you think of your pre-service training program: advantages, disadvantages and how it could be improved? Can you estimate how much you benefited from it and in which areas?</p> <p>Some say that experience is the best teacher, do you agree with them? Why?</p> <p>Do you want to quit teaching? Why/ why not?</p> <p>Describe to me some of the events that you always remember as a teacher.</p>	
6.	Effects of being a non-native speaker of English: does being a non-native teacher concern you in any way? Why/why not?	
7.	<p>Effects of being a wife and /or a mother on your job as a teacher.</p> <p>The effects of being a working wife/mother on you life.</p>	

Appendix 6: Interviewees’ Information

Name	Marital experience	Teaching experience	Date of interview
Farah	Single	Trainee	21/3/01
Noor	Single	Trainee	14/3/01
Zakia	Single	Trainee	15/3/01
Bayan	Married	Trainee	16/3/01
Shama	Single	Trainee	22/3/01
Meera	Single	Novice	15/4/01
Aneesa	Single	Novice	5/4/01
Noora	Married	Novice	19/3/01
Heba	Single	Novice	16/4/01
Yasmin	Single	Novice	30/4/01
Bushra	Single	1 year	19/3/01
Fawzia	Married	2 years	10/4/01
Amina	Married	2 years	18/4/01
Faten	Single	3 years	17/4/01
Safa	Married	3 years	3/3/01
Noaf	Married	4 years	18/3/01
Amani	Married	4 years	11/3/01
Moza	Single	5 years	20/3/01
Khulood	Married	6 years	9/5/01
Sara	Single	7 years	9/4/01
Asma	Married	7 years	18/3/01
Reem	Married	8 years	8/4/01
Maha	Married	8 years	20/3/01
Haya	Married	10 years	9/4/01

Appendix 7: Main Study: Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear teacher,

I am a postgraduate student conducting research about Omani English language teachers. The research focuses on the teachers' careers and lives as well as their professional needs and concerns at different stages of their career. There are many benefits for such research, but most importantly it, with your valuable contribution, will lead to a much-needed understanding of EFL teachers in Oman. This understanding derived from your own participation will aid decision-making at all levels.

Please help me to draw as much as possible an accurate picture of what being a teacher is by spending some of your valuable time responding to the following questions. Please answer all the questions unless stated otherwise and follow the instructions for answering each question, as this is important for the analysis of the questionnaire. There are no right or wrong answers as I am looking at different teachers' experiences. Be assured that the data will be dealt with confidentially and used for research purposes only. I do appreciate the time and effort you will spare from your busy schedule to reply to my questions.

Remember that any research about teachers can never be valid unless the information is provided by the teachers themselves, so get your pen and make your contribution now!

Thank you

Background Information

Please answer the following questions by (✓) the appropriate box or by providing the required information.

1. Age.....years
2. Marital status: ☐ single ☐ married
3. Number of children: Their ages:
4. Year of graduation from SQU:

Entry into Teaching

Please tick (✓) the appropriate box for the following questions.

5. At what point in your life did you consider becoming a teacher?
 - ☐ During my elementary school
 - ☐ During my secondary school
 - ☐ When I applied to the university
 - ☐ I have always wanted to be a teacher
 - ☐ I never wanted to be a teacher, but nothing else was available at the time
 - ☐ I never wanted to be a teacher, but I was forced to become one
6. Has your decision to become a teacher been influenced by a particular person/people? If so was it: (you can choose more than one answer)
 - ☐ One of your teachers during your school years?
 - ☐ One of your teachers during your undergraduate studies/pre-service training?
 - ☐ A member of your family?
 - ☐ I haven't been influenced by anyone
 - ☐ Others (Please specify).....
7. Please tick Four of the main reasons that encouraged you to become a teacher:
 - ☐ The desire to work with young people
 - ☐ Teaching is a stimulating and satisfying job
 - ☐ I love passing on knowledge, skills. etc.

- ☐ A suitable career for women
- ☐ Good working conditions
- ☐ Parental/family pressure
- ☐ Family tradition (other members of my family are teachers)
- ☐ Attractive salary
- ☐ Long holidays
- ☐ The best job available at the time
- ☐ Teaching is the only career where I don't have to mix with men (the school environment is suitable as it is an all female one)
- ☐ To serve my country
- ☐ I felt sure I could manage it because everybody else could
- ☐ Others (Please specify).....

8. Why did you choose to become an English language teacher (Please tick One answer only)

- ☐ I have always liked the English language and had good grades in it at school
- ☐ To speak two languages (to be bilingual)
- ☐ English is an important international language and it is useful to speak it
- ☐ To contribute to the improvement of English language teaching in Oman
- ☐ Because I didn't have a 'good' English language teacher when I was at school; therefore I wanted to become one
- ☐ I did not choose to be an English language teacher
- ☐ Others (Please specify).....

9. Looking back today, what do you think was the single most important factor in your decision to become a teacher?

.....

.....

10. Choose expressions from the following list to describe your first year as a teacher: (You can choose up to three)

- ☐ Easy
- ☐ Satisfying
- ☐ Exhausting
- ☐ Confusing
- ☐ Frightening
- ☐ Interesting
- ☐ Discouraging
- ☐ A year of discovery
- ☐ The best year in my life
- ☐ The worst year in my life
- ☐ On the whole a pleasant experience
- ☐ On the whole a nightmare
- ☐ Others (Please specify).....

11. Did you have during your first year as a teacher any doubts about your ability to continue in teaching?

- ☐ Yes (answer question 19)
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

12. If yes, why did you continue in teaching?

.....

.....

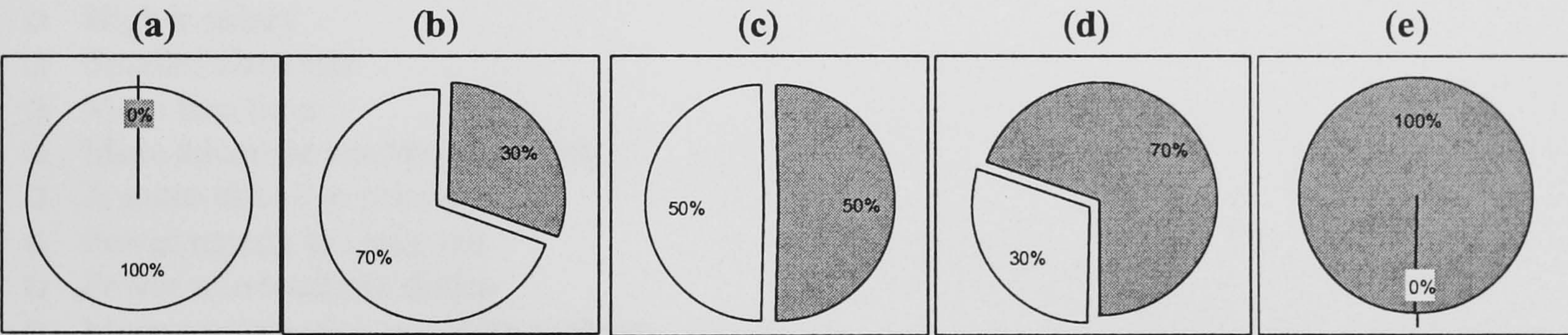
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The Present Situation

Please tick (✓) the appropriate box for the following questions.

13. Choose one of the following diagrams to indicate your general feeling about being a teacher. (circle the appropriate letter above the chosen diagram)



☐ Happy to be a teacher

☐ Unhappy to be a teacher

14. Can you identify the things that satisfy you in your teaching career? (You can choose more than one answer, but no more than three)

- ☐ Good salary
- ☐ Your pupils' test results
- ☐ Seeing your pupils' success
- ☐ Recognition of your efforts from the school administration
- ☐ Good relations with colleagues
- ☐ Praise, presents, etc. from pupils
- ☐ When you feel pupils understood what you were trying to explain
- ☐ Recognition of your efforts from your inspectors
- ☐ Long holidays
- ☐ Cooperation of pupils' parents
- ☐ Love for subject matter
- ☐ Others (Please specify).....

15. What are the things that make you feel dissatisfied with your teaching career (You can choose more than one answer, but no more than three):

- ☐ No recognition from school administration of your efforts
- ☐ Working for long hours
- ☐ The teacher has no freedom in many things for example choosing methods of teaching
- ☐ A boring routine
- ☐ Disrespectful pupils
- ☐ Uncooperative colleagues
- ☐ A controlling school administration
- ☐ Uncooperative parents
- ☐ Dislike for subject matter
- ☐ No chance for inventive or creative work
- ☐ Inadequate salary
- ☐ Unmotivated pupils
- ☐ Others (Please specify).....

16. Choose from the following list Three factors that would make you feel more satisfied in your job:

- ☐ Higher salary
- ☐ Smaller class size
- ☐ More free time
- ☐ More adequate teaching materials
- ☐ A more effective principal
- ☐ Fewer reports to make out
- ☐ Fewer non-teaching duties
- ☐ More participation in policy making
- ☐ Assistance of a teaching aide
- ☐ More adequate facilities i.e. a better teachers' room
- ☐ Others (Please specify).....

17. How would you describe your situation as a teacher Now: (you can tick more than one, but no more than three)

- ☐ I am trying to survive as a teacher
- ☐ I am still discovering a lot of things about teaching and pupils
- ☐ I have mastered the necessary teaching skills
- ☐ I feel bored and long for some new ideas in teaching
- ☐ No matter what I do I can't get through to my pupils i.e. I can't teach effectively
- ☐ I need some guidance but I don't know where to get it from
- ☐ I feel lost and need lots of help
- ☐ I wish to have an administrative post in the school instead of teaching

18. From your own experience as a teacher, how would you describe the teaching profession: (please tick One answer only)

- ☐ A tiring job
- ☐ A fulfilling job
- ☐ A boring job
- ☐ A job to earn a salary
- ☐ An interesting job
- ☐ A demanding job
- ☐ Like any other job

19. Have you ever thought of leaving teaching?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

20. Frankly, what are the Two main reasons you are remaining in teaching?

- ☐ Difficult to settle into a new job
- ☐ Financial support i.e. I need the salary
- ☐ Love for teaching
- ☐ Nothing else to do
- ☐ To have an identity and self image
- ☐ Difficult to find another job as there are not many available
- ☐ Teaching is the most suitable job for women
- ☐ Family pressure
- ☐ Love for subject matter
- ☐ Others (Please specify).....

21. Does your family life, especially being a wife and/or a mother, affect your job as a teacher?

- ☐ Yes to a large extent (answer question 22)
- ☐ No, it doesn't
- ☐ Yes to some extent (answer question 22)

22. If Yes, please describe how?

.....
.....

23. Most of the difficulties you face as a teacher are to do with: (please tick the Two most important ones only)

- ☐ Preparation and planning of lessons
- ☐ Managing of the classroom e.g. discipline, use of different activities
- ☐ Communication and interaction with pupils
- ☐ Communication and interaction with school administration
- ☐ Being creative in terms of teaching ideas, methods.. etc.

- ☐ Being able to evaluate my performance as a teacher
- ☐ Others (Please specify).....

To answer the next group of questions, please tick (✓) the appropriate box to indicate your own experience of the following issues.

- 1= Not a problem at all
- 2= A problem at times
- 3= Not sure
- 4= I need some training/help in this area
- 5= Has always been a major problem for me

Issues	1	2	3	4	5
24. Keeping discipline in the classroom					
25. Establishing a good relationship with pupils					
26. Helping pupils understand the lessons					
27. Meeting the needs of different kinds of pupils					
28. Getting new ideas and strategies of teaching					
29. Increasing my English language proficiency					
30. Selecting and teaching content effectively					
31. Motivating pupils to study					
32. Working productively with other teachers					
33. Diagnosing pupils' learning problems					
34. Assessing and reporting pupils' progress					
35. Recognising the social and emotional needs of pupils					

For the following questions, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements by ticking (✓) the appropriate box.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<div>5</div>	<div>4</div>	<div>3</div>	<div>2</div>	<div>1</div>
36. The task of teaching has been exactly what I expected before I became a teacher.				
			<div>5</div>	<div>4</div>
			<div>3</div>	<div>2</div>
			<div>1</div>	
37. Given the chance again, I would definitely choose teaching as my career.				
			<div>5</div>	<div>4</div>
			<div>3</div>	<div>2</div>
			<div>1</div>	
38. Being a non-native speaker of English causes me a lot of concern about my proficiency in English				
			<div>5</div>	<div>4</div>
			<div>3</div>	<div>2</div>
			<div>1</div>	
39. I view my role as a wife and/or a mother as taking precedence over my role as a teacher.				
			<div>5</div>	<div>4</div>
			<div>3</div>	<div>2</div>
			<div>1</div>	
40. I feel that every year I gain more experience and feel more confident as a teacher.				
			<div>5</div>	<div>4</div>
			<div>3</div>	<div>2</div>
			<div>1</div>	
41. I believe that high English language proficiency plays a major part in being a competent English language teacher.				
			<div>5</div>	<div>4</div>
			<div>3</div>	<div>2</div>
			<div>1</div>	
42. I believe that working women often risk the stability of their family life.				
			<div>5</div>	<div>4</div>
			<div>3</div>	<div>2</div>
			<div>1</div>	
43. Children and family life should be the first priority in any woman's life.				
			<div>5</div>	<div>4</div>
			<div>3</div>	<div>2</div>
			<div>1</div>	
44. I feel at ease when I am in the classroom.				
			<div>5</div>	<div>4</div>
			<div>3</div>	<div>2</div>
			<div>1</div>	
45. Sometimes I have moments of doubt about my ability to continue in teaching.				
			<div>5</div>	<div>4</div>
			<div>3</div>	<div>2</div>
			<div>1</div>	

46. How do you overcome the difficulties you face as a teacher? (Please tick the appropriate box to indicate the frequency with which you use each method)

Method	always	sometimes	hardly	never
a. I consult some of my more experienced colleagues				
b. I consult my inspectors				
c. I spend more time and effort in planning and preparing my lessons				
d. I depend on my self to develop professionally by reading in the areas I feel I need help				
e. I use the trial and error method i.e. I try things out to see if they work for me and my pupils				
f. I use my authority to control my classes				
g. I rely on my pupils' feedback				
h. I try to be friendly with other teachers and the school administration				
i. I follow the textbook guidelines				
j. I consult other teachers regardless of their experience				
k. I don't find ways to overcome some of the difficulties I face				

47. What, in your view, is the most enjoyable aspect of being a teacher? Pleas write below:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

48. What, in your view, is the most difficult aspect of being a teacher? Please write below:

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

49. Is there anything else you would like to add?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

50. Are you interested in further taking part in this study by agreeing to be interviewed by the researcher? (The interviews will be carried out in Arabic and will be about your life as a teacher).

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure (feel free to call me if you are not sure about anything regarding the interview)



If Yes- thanks! Please write below your telephone number so I can contact you.

Name:
☎:
The best time to call you:

Thank you

Thank you very much for responding to this questionnaire
I really appreciate the time and effort you put in it.

Ahoud

Appendix 8: Main Study: Trainees' Questionnaires

Dear student teacher,

I am a postgraduate student conducting research about Omani English language teachers. The research focuses on the teachers' and student teachers' careers and lives as well as their professional needs and concerns at different stages of their career. There are many benefits for such research, but most importantly it, with your valuable contribution, will lead to a much-needed understanding of EFL teachers in Oman. This understanding derived from your own participation will aid decision-making at all levels.

Please help me to draw as much as possible an accurate picture of what being a student teacher is by spending some of your valuable time responding to the following questions. Please answer all the questions unless stated otherwise and follow the instructions for answering each question, as this is important for the analysis of the questionnaire. There are no right or wrong answers as I am looking at different student teachers' experiences. Be assured that the data will be dealt with confidentially and used for research purposes only. I do appreciate the time and effort you will spare from your busy schedule to reply to my questions.

Remember that any research about teachers can never be valid unless the information is provided by the teachers themselves, so get your pen and make your contribution now!

Thank you

Background Information

Please answer the following questions by (✓) the appropriate box or by providing the required information.

1. Age.....years
2. Marital status: ☐ single ☐ married
3. Number of children: Their ages:
4. Semester:

Entry into Teaching

Please tick (✓) the appropriate box for the following questions.

5. At what point in your life did you consider becoming a teacher?
 - ☐ During my elementary school
 - ☐ During my secondary school
 - ☐ When I applied to the university
 - ☐ I have always wanted to be a teacher
 - ☐ I never wanted to be a teacher, but nothing else was available at the time
 - ☐ I never wanted to be a teacher, but I was forced to become one
6. Has your decision to become a teacher been influenced by a particular person/people? If so was it: (you can choose more than one answer)
 - ☐ One of your teachers during your school years?
 - ☐ One of your teachers during your undergraduate studies/pre-service training?
 - ☐ A member of your family?
 - ☐ I haven't been influenced by anyone
 - ☐ Others (Please specify).....

7. Please tick Four of the main reasons that encouraged you to become a teacher:

- ☐ The desire to work with young people
- ☐ Teaching is a stimulating and satisfying job
- ☐ I love passing on knowledge, skills. etc.
- ☐ A suitable career for women
- ☐ Good working conditions
- ☐ Parental/family pressure
- ☐ Family tradition (other members of my family are teachers)
- ☐ Attractive salary
- ☐ Long holidays
- ☐ The best job available at the time
- ☐ Teaching is the only career where I don't have to mix with men (the school environment is suitable as it is an all female one)
- ☐ To serve my country
- ☐ I felt sure I could manage it because everybody else could
- ☐ Others (Please specify).....

8. Why did you choose to become an English language teacher (Please tick One answer only)

- ☐ I have always liked the English language and had good grades in it at school
- ☐ To speak two languages (to be bilingual)
- ☐ English is an important international language and it is useful to speak it
- ☐ To contribute to the improvement of English language teaching in Oman
- ☐ Because I didn't have a 'good' English language teacher when I was at school; therefore I wanted to become one
- ☐ I did not choose to be an English language teacher
- ☐ Others (Please specify).....

9. Looking back today, what do you think was the single most important factor in your decision to become a teacher?

.....
.....

10. Choose expressions from the following list to describe your experience in the first semester of teaching practice: (you can choose up to three)

- ☐ Easy
- ☐ Satisfying
- ☐ Exhausting
- ☐ Confusing
- ☐ Frightening
- ☐ Interesting
- ☐ Discouraging
- ☐ A semester of discovery
- ☐ The best semester in my life
- ☐ The worst semester in my life
- ☐ On the whole a pleasant experience

- ☐ On the whole a nightmare
- ☐ Others (Please specify).....

11. Did you have during your first semester of teaching practice any doubts about your ability to continue in teaching?

- ☐ Yes (answer question 12)
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

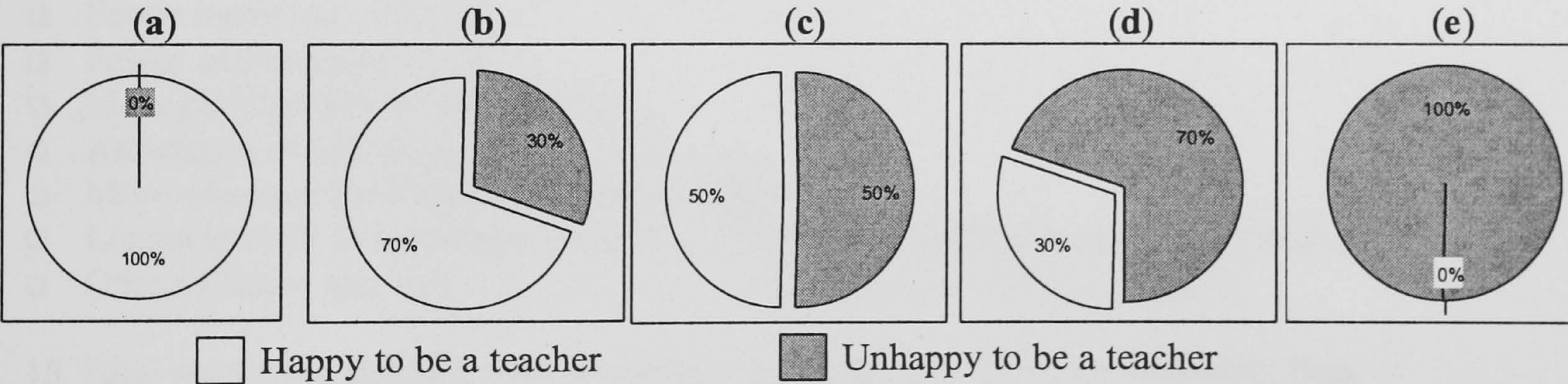
12. If yes, what was the reason/s for this feeling?
.....
.....

13. What are you going to do about it i.e. are you still going to become a teacher or find another job?
.....
.....

2.5. The Present

Please tick (✓) the appropriate box for the following questions.

14. Choose one of the following diagrams to indicate your general feeling about being a teacher. (Circle the appropriate letter above the chosen diagram)



15. Can you identify the things that satisfy you in your teaching practice (You can choose more than one answer, but no more than three)

- ☐ Your pupils' good test results
- ☐ Recognition of your efforts from the class teacher
- ☐ Recognition of your efforts from the school administration
- ☐ Good relations with colleagues
- ☐ Praise, presents, etc. from pupils
- ☐ When you feel pupils understood what you were trying to explain
- ☐ Recognition of your efforts from your supervisors
- ☐ Cooperation of pupils' parents
- ☐ Love for subject matter
- ☐ Others (Please specify).....

16. What are the things that dissatisfy you in teaching practice (you can choose more than one answer, but no more than three):

- ☐ No recognition from school administration of your efforts
- ☐ Being evaluated by supervisors, class teacher and headteacher
- ☐ The teacher has no freedom in many things for example choosing methods of teaching
- ☐ A boring routine
- ☐ Disrespectful pupils
- ☐ Uncooperative colleagues
- ☐ A controlling school administration
- ☐ Uncooperative parents
- ☐ Dislike for subject matter
- ☐ No chance for inventive or creative work
- ☐ Criticism from the class teacher
- ☐ Unmotivated pupils
- ☐ Others (Please specify).....

17. Choose from the following list Three factors that would make you feel more satisfied in your teaching practice:

- ☐ More cooperation from the class teacher
- ☐ Smaller class size
- ☐ More free time
- ☐ More adequate teaching materials
- ☐ A more effective principal
- ☐ Fewer reports to make out
- ☐ Fewer non-teaching duties
- ☐ More participation in policy making
- ☐ Assistance of a teaching aide
- ☐ More adequate facilities i.e. a better teachers' room
- ☐ Longer periods of teaching practice e.g. 3 months of continuous teaching practice
- ☐ Others (Please specify).....

18. How would you describe your situation as a teacher Now: (you can tick more than one, but no more than three)

- ☐ I am trying to survive as a teacher
- ☐ I am still discovering a lot of things about teaching and pupils
- ☐ I have mastered the necessary teaching skills
- ☐ I feel bored and long for some new ideas in teaching
- ☐ No matter what I do I can't get through to my pupils i.e. I can't teach effectively
- ☐ I need some guidance but I don't know where to get it from
- ☐ I feel lost and need lots of help
- ☐ I wish to have an administrative post in the school instead of teaching

19. From your own experience as a student teacher, how would you describe the teaching profession: (please tick One answer only)

- ☐ A tiring job
- ☐ A fulfilling job
- ☐ A boring job
- ☐ A job to earn a salary
- ☐ An interesting job
- ☐ A demanding job
- ☐ Like any other job

20. Frankly, what are the Two main reasons you want to be a teacher?

- ☐ Financial support i.e. I need the salary
- ☐ Love for teaching
- ☐ Nothing else to do
- ☐ To have an identity and self image
- ☐ Difficult to find another job as there are not many available
- ☐ Teaching is the most suitable job for women
- ☐ Family pressure
- ☐ Love for subject matter
- ☐ Others (Please specify).....

21. Most of the difficulties you face as a teacher are to do with: (please tick the Two most important ones only)

- ☐ Preparation and planning of lessons
- ☐ Managing of the classroom e.g. discipline, use of different activities
- ☐ Communication and interaction with pupils
- ☐ Communication and interaction with school administration
- ☐ Being creative in terms of teaching ideas, methods.. etc.
- ☐ Being able to evaluate my performance as a teacher
- ☐ Others (Please specify).....

To answer the next group of questions, please tick (✓) the appropriate box to indicate your own experience of the following issues.

- 1= Not a problem at all
- 2= A problem at times
- 3= Not sure
- 4= I need some training/help in this area
- 5= Has always been a major problem for me

Issues	1	2	3	4	5
22. Keeping discipline in the classroom					
23. Establishing a good relationship with pupils					
24. Helping pupils understand the lessons					
25. Meeting the needs of different kinds of pupils					
26. Getting new ideas and strategies of teaching					
27. Increasing my English language proficiency					
28. Selecting and teaching content effectively					
29. Motivating pupils to study					
30. Working productively with other teachers					
31. Diagnosing pupils’ learning problems					
32. Assessing and reporting pupils’ progress					
33. Recognising the social and emotional needs of pupils					

34. What, in your view, is the most enjoyable aspect of being a teacher? Pleas write below:

.....

.....

.....

35. What, in your view, is the most difficult aspect of being a teacher? Please write below:

.....

.....

.....

For the following questions, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements by ticking (✓)the appropriate box.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1

36. The task of teaching has been exactly what I expected before I became a teacher.

<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------

37. Given the chance again, I would definitely choose teaching as my career.

<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------

38. Being a non-native speaker of English causes me a lot of concern about my proficiency in English

<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------

39. I view my role as a wife and/or a mother as taking precedence over my role as a teacher.

<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------

40. I feel that with every teaching practice experience I gain more experience and feel more confident as a teacher.

<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------

41. I believe that high English language proficiency plays a major part in being a competent English language teacher.

<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------

42. I believe that working women often risk the stability of their family life.

<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------

43. Children and family life should be the first priority in any woman’s life.

<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------

44. I feel at ease when I am in the classroom.

<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------

45. Sometimes I have moments of doubt about my ability to continue in teaching.

<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------

46. One of my main concerns is getting a good evaluation of my performance as a teacher from my supervisors

<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------

47. How do you overcome the difficulties you face as a teacher? (Please tick the appropriate box to indicate the frequency with which you use each method)

Method	always	sometimes	hardly	never
a. I consult some of my more experienced colleagues				
b. I consult my supervisors				
c. I spend more time and effort in planning and preparing my lessons				
d. I depend on my self to develop professionally by reading in the areas I feel I need help				
e. I use the trial and error method i.e. I try things out to see if they work for me and my pupils				
f. I use my authority to control my classes				
g. I rely on my pupils' feedback				
h. I try to be friendly with other teachers and the school administration				
i. I follow the textbook guidelines				
j. I consult other teachers regardless of their experience				
k. I don't find ways to overcome some of the difficulties I face				
i. I consult the class teacher				

48. Is there anything else you would like to add?
.....
.....
.....
.....

49. Are you interested in further taking part in this study by agreeing to be interviewed by the researcher? (The interviews will be carried out in Arabic and will be about your life as a teacher).

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure (feel free to call me if you are not sure about anything regarding the interview)

If Yes- thanks! Please write below your telephone number so I can contact you.

Name:

☎:

The best time to call you:

Thank you

Thank you very much for responding to this questionnaire
I really appreciate the time and effort you put in it.

Ahoud